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ISSUE
419

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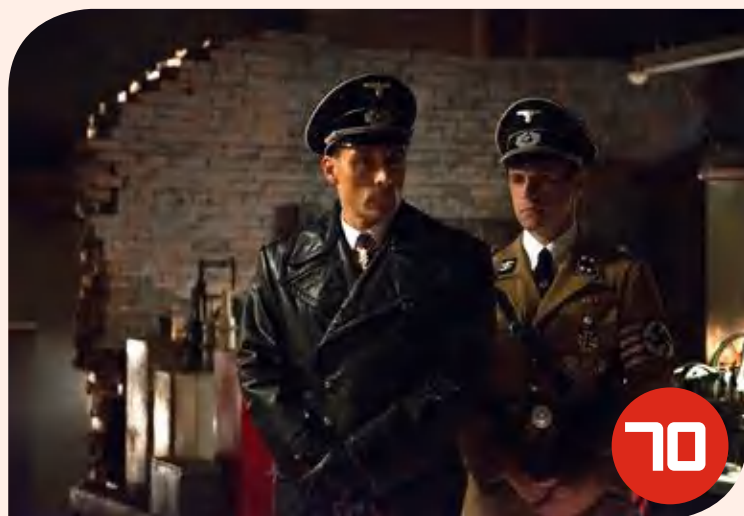
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 419.

It is indeed a privilege to be Editor of STARBURST for this issue in particular – The return of **Star Wars** as an ongoing franchise. We all remember the day when out of the blue it was announced that George Lucas had sold Lucasfilm, and that new owners Disney had a whole new trilogy planned, plus spinoffs. Well, here we are on the eve of the release of **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** aka **Episode VII**, and we bring you the latest on the movie that will relaunch this behemoth of a series for a new generation to obsess over.

STARBURST has a long history with **Star Wars**. Back in 1977, our honorary Editor-In-Chief, the mighty Dez Skinn got the exclusive rights to cover the release way back in issue number 1. A move that literally led to the Star in STARBURST, as Dez wanted this new title to become synonymous with a movie that he rightly recognised as being a game changer. It's amazing that all these years later the first magazine to ever feature any images from the **Star Wars** Universe is still around to share this with you all.

Also in this issue, we feature the TV adaptation of a novel by Philip K. Dick that is one of my favourite novels of all time. We take a look at the upcoming series of **The Man in the High Castle**, and also peruse the talents of the author who was responsible for some of the most important genre stories ever written.

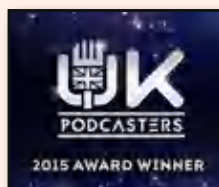
It's not all good news, though! Sadly, my response in last month's Letter Page seems to have gotten a little out of hand and 'Whogate' has literally doubled the size of our regular Feedback section. Yours truly thought he had drawn a line under things last issue!

That's not all, we also have a look at the history of Charles Schulz's classic **Peanuts** comic strip, which heads back onto the big screen in December, a preview of Ron Howard's nautical tale **In the Heart of the Sea**, and some seasonal horror with a visit from **Krampus**.

We have also warped the fabric of the universe to create enough room to also fit in all of your regular columns. Wowzers. I think we genuinely need to apologise in advance for the negative impact upon your career and relationships of this information-packed monster of an edition. Don't worry though, if you lose everything you hold dear, we will still be here for you...

Until next issue,
Keep watching the weird and wonderful,

Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
 or email: letters@starburstmagazine.com

Who would have thought that one innocent little feature would have opened such a can of worms...

STAR

COCK VS REASON

I am writing in protest at Mike Royce's completely OTT response to Paul Clarke of Redditch's passionate defence of DOCTOR WHO show runner Steven Moffat (Issue 418). I'm really going to have to measure my words here...

Over the decades, I have always found STARBURST to be very even-handed in its treatment of all viewpoints, including those emanating from entrenched minority sections of fandom. Paul Clarke is a member of just such a minority, the so-called 'colossal nob-ends', a group that in recent times have been on the receiving end of a tidal wave of flak from poncey media types like you, Royce. As Editor of STARBURST, you are in a highly influential position to lead opinions, to swing debates, to change the game. So I ask you: what game are you playing when you shout down the likes of Paul Clarke from your lofty perch (and how's the air up there by the way, Big Man?)

Just stop for a second and think about the world you're creating: no more pasty-faced shitstains in the convention bar with half a lager shandy boasting loudly about meeting Steven Moffat; no more arrogant little pricks rudely butting into your private conversation with "Oh I think you'll find it was..." (insert completely unwanted WHO factoid); no more shifty-looking loners ejaculating with uncontrolled excitement while waiting in a queue for Katy Manning to sign their limited edition Big Finish CDs; no more socially crippled fuckwits blindly reinforcing the popular media consensus that DOCTOR WHO fans are just a bunch of pontificating, anally retentive tosspots. All that vibrancy and colour gone forever and to be replaced by what? Reasoned arguments, objective opinions

and evidence-based assertions, if you're to be taken seriously! And if that's not a giant tumbleweed pause I don't know what is.

Since their heyday in the late 1980s, fans like Paul Clarke have provided so much genuine entertainment with their deluded pomposity, face-palm logic and offensively unmeasured outrage. I fear your response to him has brought the demise of the nob-ends a giant step closer to reality.

And if they do become extinct? Make no mistake Royce, I will name you The Executioner. And you will know my name is...

Mike 'The Cock' Coldwell.

I have read your comments and you have given me pause for thought. I can only apologise for inadvertently helping bring about the demise of this ignoble species. I had not considered the big picture. Their comedy value escaped me in my blinkered quest for behavioural normality. In addition I, had not considered that, similar to Cecil the Lion, Paul Clarke was also a very special case. Being an extra massive 'colossal nob-end', he was providing entertainment for the masses. I should have been aware of his rare status when I spotted the GPS tracking device around his neck. Admittedly, it was obscured by his long rainbow scarf, but that is a poor excuse on my part. I can only hope that when I spot a member of the species in the future, whose chances of avoiding extinction (via the means of procreation at least) that I will recognize the social benefits for society in keeping them around, and act with better judgement.

Jordan M. Royce. Editor

LETTER

SKYFAIL

I was reading the article about the new Bond film - SPECTRE and when referencing to SKYFALL the reviewer John Townsend states that Bond was shot by Moneypenny and Bond is presumed dead. If the reviewer cares to watch the precredit sequence of SKYFALL where Bond is on top of the train, and M gives the order to shoot the female who pulls the trigger of the rifle is most certainly not Moneypenny. I trust this mistake will be noted as such and readers told that the mistake was made by the reviewer I am also curious as to how many other readers have notified you of this typo

Donald Kirkbride, via EMAIL

Wow Donald. We all rewatched that moment in SKYFALL and we just don't know where you are coming from with this... Unless it's a Zygon, it certainly looks like Moneypenny did it to us!

WHINE O'CLOCK

Well done, Paul Clarke, for a not wholly well-judged but entirely satisfying letter. Paul Mount probably isn't a "vile man" in any way, so doesn't deserve to be called such, but from my distant memories of when I used to read STARBURST, he is a melodramatic whiner with the emotional insight of a badly stunted four-year-old... so I did chuckle at your letter. I got a couple of lines into the self-important "the gloves are off" declarations of the editor afterward, then guessed what a self-justifying bit of posturing it was going to be, and put the issue back on the shelf unpurchased, as always. But I did get a chuckle.

(Feel free to print my letter too, or answer this email if you like, I won't read either)

Yours sincerely,

TW, via EMAIL

TW, at the moment, there does seem to be a lot of melodramatic whiners about.

STAR MAN

Hi chums (and especially Jordan Royce). I just wanted to say I really enjoyed this months extended FEEDBACK section (Issue 418). Not so much the comments about DR WHO from Paul Clarke, who's clearly watching a different

show to me, but rather the lengthy reply and final killer punch line which had me chuckling greatly. Quality stuff Mr Royce. Surely you deserve a Star Letter award and some free issues of the magazine for that one? Failing that I'll do the honours by renewing my subscription.

You sir are a legend. Cheers, *Eddie Maddock, via EMAIL*
 P.S (Paul Mount is spot on with his review of THE MARTIAN as well).

Nice to hear from you again Eddie "Haddock" Maddock! Thanks, there's no need to fish for compliments with you around is there!

EVERYTHING CHANGES BUT WHO

Dear Editor, some things never change as the letters page in Issue 418 proved. It almost made me nostalgic for the old STARBURST from the 1980's when such letters as Paul Clarke's would fill every issue, taking Paul Mount to task for daring to criticise shows such as ROBIN OF SHERWOOD, STAR TREK and yes, DOCTOR WHO! I'm inclined to agree with Mr Mount that DOCTOR WHO has been turned into a comedy show, a season of inconsequence masquerading as something important.

Having said that, I did enjoy the Dalek two parter mainly for the presence of Davros whose return was long overdue.

Hopefully, future letter writers to STARBURST will show less bile and more balance. Regards,

Edward O'Reilly, Dublin, Ireland

Hey girl I know the situation changed, and so much is new, but something in my life remains the same cos everything changes but WHO... we're a thousand miles apart, but you know I love WHO.

TANKS, BUT NO TANKS

I've been reading STARBURST since the late 1970s, but I'm pretty sure that this is the first time I've ever written to you.

I felt compelled to do so after reading Paul Clarke's response to Paul Mount's article and Jordan Royce's response to this. I have watched DOCTOR WHO, through thick and thin, for a very long time and to even



"The carrot is supposed to be your nose!"

Winner: Paul Foster. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

suggest that Steven Moffat is presiding over some kind of 'golden era' is, at best, hilarious and delusional and at worst seriously worrying! After watching the first episode of the current series, I have given up watching the programme until Steven Moffat relinquishes his control over it. And I know that I'm not alone in this. Allow me to elaborate...

I am sorry. I mean, I am really, really, *really* sorry. But enough is enough! Something has got to be said and I am going to say it. Steven Moffat; please, please, please, *please*, if you really love DOCTOR WHO the way you tell us you do, then please go. To paraphrase the Doctor from episode 5 of *The Daemons*; "You've done enough harm! Leave the programme alone and GO!"

I have been driven to make this plea having just watched the first episode of the new series, *'The Magician's Apprentice'*. Was it the worst episode of DOCTOR WHO I have ever seen? Possibly. Did it make any sense at all? No. Intelligent writing has been given the old heave-ho and replaced with stupidity. I realise that the programme has had to be dumbed-down in order to fit in with what is now expected of a Saturday evening primetime show, but did it have to be dumbed-down to the extent that it was just a collection of random, meaningless scenes, images and set-pieces with nothing even remotely resembling a coherent plot holding them all together? The Doctor is now a pitiful figure, who has lost all purpose and dignity

and Missy, thanks to Michelle Gomez's awful, scenery-chewing 'performance' is just an embarrassment. Even the appearance of the original Dalek City, complete with 'classic series' Daleks and poor old Davros couldn't redeem this mess.

Moffat is in a privileged position and yet he abuses it by churning out the kind of scripts that would be rejected if they were submitted by anyone else. By no stretch of the imagination (which, sadly, he is lacking) is he the right man for the job; he is a writer who seems incapable of an original idea and instead takes the characters and concepts of others and recycles them – see *Jekyll* and *Sherlock*. And whilst we're at it, weren't several of the key ideas in this first episode direct steals from previous Doctor Who stories? Disembodied, nightmarish hands coming up from the ground to clutch at a hapless victim – *Trial of a Timelord*. A spaceship that is not really a spaceship at all, complete with phoney-airlock-reveal – *Invasion of the Dinosaurs*. The Doctor menacing Davros with a ray gun – *Resurrection of the Daleks*. What next, I wonder? And I haven't even mentioned the clumsy attempt at ripping off STAR WARS. Ooops, I have now.

Whilst I accept that many people hold the mighty Moff in very high regard, I'm not entirely convinced that a man who thinks that BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT (transported to a medieval setting) with a guitar-wielding Doctor standing atop a tank and playing his own theme tune is really the right man to be

calling the shots.

So please Mr Moffat, do the decent thing and bequeath your power to someone else more deserving of it.

In short, and to sum up, Moffat is a terrible writer; truly awful; his plotting is non-existent and he relies, so it seems, on ideas and scenes plundered from old episodes of not just DOCTOR WHO but every other sci-fi source available. Like the Doctor's arch foe Davros, resurrected to add some class to the proceedings, Moffat is a megalomaniac on an ego trip; both the Doctor and Missy become just a little bit too Glaswegian when they get angry or excited. Yes, we know you're Scottish, Steven. We get that. But the joke has already worn a bit thin.

Full marks to STARBURST for publishing a truthful and well-judged account of the sad and pitiful state (of decay?) of a once great programme; such a change from the crawling, sycophantic rubbish printed in the pages of Doctor Who Magazine. I shan't be watching DOCTOR WHO again for a long time. But I hope to be reading STARBURST for at least another 36 years!

Chris Drake, via EMAIL
P.S. I've never met Steven Moffat, but I HAVE met Colin Baker (more than once!) and I attach a photo!!! (sorry it's not a selfie!!)



That sounds a good decision at least for the moment. Not everyone can be a Time Lord and have the luxury of wasting time! At least there are plenty of other things to watch instead, including great sci-fi! It's such a pity that Moffat is driving away longtime fans of the show, but with WHO's perfect reset concept, the potential is always there for the show to be great again at some point.

It's always nice to see fans meeting their favourite actors, thanks for sharing the photo.

And you say you've met him more than once, exciting! You should try and meet him a few more times and make it a Baker's dozen!

ADVENTURES IN TIMESLOT DISGRACE

Having just received issue 418 today, I was interested to read the letter from Paul Clarke (and response to said letter). Whilst not agreeing with everything in this letter, and certainly not the personal attack on the reviewer, I was somewhat surprised to read that STARBURST had only received one letter in support of the current Moffat-era DOCTOR WHO.

In my (humble) opinion, I would probably concede that, over the piece, the Moffat-era has not been of a consistently high standard as the RTD-era. However, that's not to say, it's all bad. There have been a lot of good episodes, a few excellent ones and, admittedly, some which have failed to hit the mark. Does that mean it's all doom and gloom for television WHO? I would suggest not.

Every long-running programme experiences highs and lows. Would a new person at the helm, bringing fresh ideas and a new approach, inject a new lease of life into the Timelord? Maybe, maybe not.

Other factors could also be playing at least a small part in the recent audience decline; a later timeslot might be less suitable, competition from ratings big-hitters like THE X-FACTOR and the RUGBY WORLD CUP, or simply audience fatigue (it's happened before - periods throughout the show's history where ratings were low but are now regarded more positively!).

Having said all that, notwithstanding the electric-guitar entrance in the opening episode, I would argue that this current season has had a very strong set of opening episodes. I would hope I am not alone in this thinking. Human nature being what it is, it's not surprising that people who dislike what they are seeing are more vocal about it. Still, those who would disagree are entitled to do so. We all have different opinions, all equally valid. I would just encourage those who feel as I do to perhaps make their voices heard

(I know you are out there somewhere!). I know from this issue Paul Mount did not enjoy the opening two-parter. Hopefully, he enjoyed the next two episodes. Either way, I look forward to reading his assessment.

Anyway, thanks for listening.
Craig Elliot, Linlithgow

If something is good enough, people will always find a way to see it, and it doesn't matter what time slot it has, or what is on the other channels at the same time. WHO fans seem to say that the ratings are down because a lot of people record the show or watch it on BBC iPlayer. If it clashes with something and the choice has to be made, why is it not WHO that is watched live, and the other programme saved to watch later on demand? It's all made so easy these days.

Long running tv shows do sometimes have low points, but as soon as they reach the low point, that's it - they often get axed, or they get the leeway of 1 more season to turn things around. New TV shows get cancelled before the full first series has even aired if they aren't cutting the muster, yet WHO keeps going. It's not the '70s anymore where people would watch whatever was on as there were only a few channels. There is no excuse for a dip in a show in 2015, there are so many excellent shows being made at the moment which get consistent ratings of 8/10 or higher every week, the odd episode in a series can be subjective but nothing like the dissension in the ranks we currently have with WHO.

It needs to take a break before WHO is doomed for ever. DOCTOR WHO used to be the gateway drug for sci-fi fans and scientists of the future, what a shame.

Shauna Askew

P.S Look out next month for our new column - ASKEW AND WHO

A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE?

To clarify, I'm not writing in response to Paul Clarke's taking issue with STARBURST's Paul Mount to defend the man (see 'FEEDBACK' in Issue 418). Clarke's entitled to his opinion, as is Mount, and I'll let that be. I am writing to

confirm, however, that Clarke isn't the only reader to find issue with Mount's ongoing flogging of the current incarnation of DOCTOR WHO; I, too, grew weary of it, and I've only been a STARBURST reader for about a year now. I never felt the need to write the editor about it, though. I just figured said flogging was Mount's resident shtick. When he carries on, I simply brush down past those bits and try to find passages wherein he finds some perspective.

I can appreciate any editor's desire to defend one's staff. It'd be nice to see such zeal defending one's readership, even when they might perchance be wrong. Or wrongheaded.

Respectfully,
Ed Zimmerman, via EMAIL

To be fair Ed, I always allow the writers in STARBURST to have a voice. Unlike many other publications I do not impose any Editorial 'stance' and actively encourage everyone to have a voice. Whereas the recent few years of WHO are not to the taste of Paul Mount, this is often balanced out by the views of JR Southall in the column *Watching Doctor Who*, who finds the current series more to his liking.

Jordan M. Royce. Editor

TROLLS AND TRIBULATIONS

Whilst I do not always agree with editor Jordan Royce in his column, however I did enjoy his response to the letter penned by Mr Clarke. It was a rational and reasoned riposte to a man who had clearly lost his senses including his humour for it is patently clear that it is all subjective in the end and I applaud the editor for reminding this fellow that there is no reason for his vile attack on Mr Mount's person. Steven Moffat, being a success in his own right, would realise he has his detractors. I hope Mr Clarke enjoyed his winnings regards his compendium!

Maz, via EMAIL

What do you mean you don't ALWAYS agree with me? Then I think you are a vile hum... Oops, Sorry. Got carried away there. Don't know what came over me...

Jordan M. Royce. Editor

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NEXT ISSUE: 420 ON SALE FROM DECEMBER 18TH

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



These newly released character posters for the eagerly awaited Duncan (**Moon**) Jones adaptation of Blizzard Entertainment's popular game give us a closer look at Lothar (Travis Fimmel) and Durotan (Toby Kebbell). Not only that, we also have a new title for the international market; outside the US, it will now be known as **Warcraft: The Beginning**. Expect Orc-based mayhem when the film is released in the UK on June 3rd, 2016.

MARVEL

The biggest news when it comes to Marvel this month centres on the company's First Family. Yep, that'd be Reed Richards, Sue Storm, Johnny Storm, and Ben Grimm – also collectively known as the **Fantastic Four**. Earlier this year saw Josh Trank's **Fantastic Four** redo become one of the biggest superhero stinkers of all time, taking barely over \$50 million at the global box office. Keep in mind that superhero movies these days have taken over \$1 billion and you'll see why this latest FF movie was deemed such a monumental bomb. Whilst **Fantastic Four 2** was initially pencilled in by 20th Century Fox for a June 2017 release, the dismal performance of this year's film has thrown up major doubts on if a **FF2** will even see the light of day. Now the big news here is that, to the joy of many an FF loyalist, there are rumours that the cinematic rights to Marvel's First Family could finally be on their way to Marvel Studios, as such making the **Fantastic Four** part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The story on this is that Fox are desperate to strike a deal with Marvel for the television rights to the X-Men for their planned

X-Men TV series, and as such Fox are willing to offer the cinematic **Fantastic Four** rights to sweeten the deal. Along with the rights for the **Fantastic Four** also comes the cinematic rights to characters like Silver Surfer, Doctor Doom, Galactus, and The Watcher, which would open up huge possibilities for Marvel Studios going forward and would maybe even give them some solid rogues to rely on other than Loki and Thanos. There's even talk that a **Fantastic Four** movie could be one of Marvel Studios' recently announced mystery 2020 movies. Of course, there's no official comment from Marvel or Fox on all of this, so treat it as purely speculation for now. Regardless, how awesome would it be to see the FF in the MCU? After all, this wouldn't be the first time that such a move has happened, with Spider-Man finally set to appear in the Marvel Cinematic Universe as part of **Captain America: Civil War** next May before the Wallcrawler spins off to his own MCU adventures.

Sticking with the MCU, one team that definitely *will* be a part of Marvel Studios' future is the Guardians of the Galaxy. With James Gunn's **Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2** set for a May 2017 release, this month brings word of a new addition to the film. French actress

Pom Klementieff, likely best known to genre fans for her appearance in Spike Lee's **Oldboy** remake (if you were one of those unfortunate enough to see that film), has joined **Guardians 2** in an unknown role. She'll be featured alongside the returning Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana, Dave Bautista, Bradley Cooper, Vin Diesel, Karen Gillan, Michael Rooker, and likely Josh Brolin's Thanos. One person who *won't* be a part of the film, though, is Matthew McConaughey. After revealing earlier in the year that he'd met with Marvel Studios to discuss a potential role, new reports have surfaced to say McConaughey has turned down the main villain role for **Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2**. No details are known on just *who* the villain is, but it definitely won't be played by Oscar-winner McConaughey.

Moving our attention over to another sequel, this month has seen confirmation that Mark Ruffalo's Hulk will definitely be a major part of **Thor: Ragnarok**. Taika Waititi is still to be officially announced as directing the film, yet that seems a lock right now, but Ruffalo has revealed that Hulk will indeed be a key player when **Ragnarok** comes around. It's expected that the Green Goliath will be kept away from the big screen until the third **Thor** film, which hits cinemas in November 2017.

Now whilst **Fantastic Four** may have been a disaster earlier this year for 20th Century Fox, Marvel Studios' and Disney's **Ant-Man** was massively enjoyed by many a fan and critic when it hit screens back in July. As such, a month or so ago brought word that a sequel was on the way. Currently titled **Ant-Man and The Wasp**, the latest word on the film is that Peyton Reed, director of **Ant-Man**, is in advanced talks to return and direct this follow-up. The sequel will see Paul Rudd's Scott Lang returning, with him joined by Evangeline Lilly's Hope Van Dyne as The Wasp, as indicated at the end of **Ant-Man**. At present, **Ant-Man and The Wasp** is set for a July 2018 release.

Elsewhere in MCU news, **Doctor Strange** has brought in **Boardwalk Empire**'s Michael Stuhlbarg as Doctor Nicodemus West, the surgeon who actually fixes the Sorcerer Supreme's hands and even goes with him to Kamar-Taj to undergo his own magical, mystical training. Stuhlbarg joins a cast that includes Benedict Cumberbatch as the titular Master of the Mystic Arts, Tilda Swinton as The Ancient One, Chiwetel Ejiofor as the villainous Baron Mordo, and an unconfirmed female lead role for Rachel McAdams. Scott Derrickson's **Doctor Strange** is currently set for a November 2016 release. Then there's another new character on the way when **Captain Marvel** hits the big screen in March 2019. That film has yet to find a director or someone to fill its lead role, but UFC Women's Bantamweight Champion Ronda Rousey has again talked about her wish to play Carol Danvers, with her hoping that her role in Mark Wahlberg's **Mile 22** and then taking the lead in the **Road House** remake will serve her well in her attempt to be the solution to Marvel Studios' quest to find their Captain Marvel.

In one final piece of Marvel-based news, 20th Century Fox's Channing Tatum-starring **Gambit** is still in search of a director. After Rupert Wyatt officially departed the film a month or so back, the latest rumour is that Doug Liman could be close to penning a deal to helm the film. Liman is best known for his work on the likes of **Jumper**, **Edge of Tomorrow** and **The Bourne Identity**. At present, **Gambit** is still scheduled for an October 2016 release, although the longer the film goes without a director, the more likely there is to be delays. ^{AP}

SIX BILLION DOLLAR MAN

Remember that **Six Billion Dollar Man** redo that's on the way? You know, the one with Mark Wahlberg as Steve Austin? Well, it's now been given a release date.

TWC-Dimension has announced that the film will hit the big screen on December 22nd, 2017, with principal photography due to start in September 2016. The reboot/remake/relaunch/rejig/redo/reimagining (*delete as applicable depending on which term is the current flavour of the month*) already has a screenplay in place from **Wild Tales**' Damián Szifron and will see Wahlberg produce alongside Stephen Levinson and Bob Weinstein.

As part of this announcement, Wahlberg commented, "I'm thrilled to assemble **The Six Billion Dollar Man** for the big screen with the likes of Bob Weinstein and Damián Szifron. We look forward to creating a Steve Austin for the 21st century."

Additionally, Szifron said, "Writing the screenplay was such a fantastic ride and embarking on this journey with Mark, Bob



Chloë Grace Moretz is the focus of the latest poster for sci-fi thriller **The 5th Wave**, which promises high-octane post-apocalyptic action. Director J. Blakeson's previous film **The Disappearance of Alice Creed** (2009) wasn't terrible, so we have our hopes raised for this come the January 22nd, 2016 release.

and Stephen to take this story to a whole new level is simply spectacular. Growing up, these kinds of films left an indelible mark on me and now it feels so good to be making one."

Finally, Bob Weinstein chimed in, "Damián's unique vision and long-time passion for this story will usher in a new take on this series for a new generation. We are excited to release the film during the holidays to bring audiences an explosive reimagining of this cultural icon."

Ah, there we are – so this redo is being labelled a 'reimagining'. ^{AP}

STAR TREK

CBS Television Studios has confirmed a new **Star Trek** series will begin in January 2017.

The new Trek will be the first original series developed for CBS All Access, the streaming service that already features the previous **Star Trek** shows. The executive producer will be Alex Kurtzman, co-writer and producer of the two recent rebooted films.

CBS President David Stapf said: "There is no better time to give **Star Trek** fans a new series than on the heels of the original show's 50th anniversary celebration. Everyone here has great respect for this storied franchise, and we're excited to launch its next television chapter in the creative mind and skilled hands of Alex Kurtzman, someone who knows this world and its audience intimately."

Marc DeBevoise, Executive Vice President/General Manager of CBS Digital Media added: "This new series will premiere to the national CBS audience, then boldly go where no first-run **Star Trek** series has gone before – directly to its millions of fans through CBS All Access. We've experienced terrific growth for CBS All Access, expanding the service across affiliates and devices in a very short time. We now have an incredible opportunity to accelerate this growth with the iconic **Star Trek**, and its devoted and passionate fan base, as our first original series."

They do stress the as-yet-untitled new series is not going to be related to next year's **Star Trek Beyond**, distributed by Paramount Pictures, due for release on July 22nd, 2016.

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on Horror Channel...

NOVEMBER 28TH – NIGHT CREATURES (1962)

One of Hammer's more fanciful films is a retelling of the classic Doctor Syn story with the inimitable Peter Cushing as the parson of a coastal parish beset by ghoulish 'Marsh Phantoms'. Also known as **Captain Clegg**, it's a rip-roaring adventure with some fantastic set pieces. A young Oliver Reed provides able support, and there's a larger than usual role for Hammer stalwart Michael Ripper.

+++

DECEMBER 9TH – ALL THE BOYS LOVE MANDY LANE (2006)

An unusually fresh and fun take on the traditional slasher film has a group of teens being killed off one by one while enjoying a break at a remote ranch. Sparky dialogue and powerful performances raise it far above the usual standard.

+++

DECEMBER 14TH – BASKET CASE (1982)

Frank Henenlotter's amazingly entertaining low budget horror follows a revenge mission with a difference as Duane (Kevin Van Hentenryck) kills the doctors who separated him from his misshapen Siamese twin, Belial, whom he carries about in an oversized wicker basket.

+++

DECEMBER 16TH – CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE (1980)

A former cause célèbre, this Italian-made classic sees John Saxon and Giovanni Lombardo Radice (under the Anglicised name John Morghen) returning from Vietnam infected with a virus that gives them an appetite for human flesh. Still effective, it's a rollicking action-packed horror film with more than enough to keep the bloodthirsty happy.

+++

The Classic **Doctor Who** series continues its phenomenal run with more fantastic stories this month. Tom Baker's incarnation takes a trip to **Planet of Evil**, faces **The Android Invasion** and battles **The Brain of Morbius**, while Jon Pertwee screams **Death to the Daleks!** Also, there can only be one (or maybe two...) as Duncan MacLeod (Adrian Paul) of the Clan MacLeod takes centre stage as the 1992 series **Highlander** begins.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.

DC

Regardless of how much people were turned off by Henry Cavill's Superman snapping the neck of General Zod in a totally-not-Superman way, the majority are still eagerly anticipating Ben Affleck's Dark Knight when **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice** arrives in March. Additionally, Warner Brothers is believed to be so impressed with Affleck's turn as Bats that a solo film is on the way, with a trilogy even being talked about. Affleck will be co-writing the film, currently being referred to as simply **The Batman**, alongside DC's Geoff Johns, with both Affleck and Johns rumoured to take directing duties. What the news this month is, though, is that one Jason Todd is set to play a huge role in the future of any and all Caped Crusader movies. It's being reported that Warner Bros currently have big plans to have the Red Hood play a large part in the first of their new Bat movies. The Red Hood in question, of course, is Jason Todd, the deceased Robin who played such a vital part of Batman's life for the 15 or so years that he was in the grave. He'd then kind of return from the dead in the fantastic **Hush** before a full-blown return in **Under the Hood**, brewing with angst and a vigilante edge that saw him happily kill criminals whilst also intentionally dropping clues so that Batman would know who he was. This new story claims that Jason will be one of two main villains in **The Batman**, the other being Jared Leto's Joker. Additionally, it's believed that Dick Grayson, as Nightwing, will also be a part of Bats' solo movies, although there's no word on whether there's a role for Tim Drake in this world at this stage. Part of the push for Red Hood is down to how much buzz Marvel Studios created by introducing the Winter Soldier in **Captain America: Winter**

Soldier – because, y'know, 'new lethal rogue is revealed to be twisted version of a long-dead sidekick' is all the fashion nowadays. At this stage, it's believed that **The Batman** is likely to be hitting screens in 2019 or 2020, although Affleck's Dark Knight will first feature in next year's duo of **Batman v Superman** and **Suicide Squad** before then playing a key role in Zack Snyder's two-part **Justice League** in 2017 and 2019.

One character who will also be appearing in **Batman v Superman** and **Justice League** is Wonder Woman. Gal Gadot is signed up to play Diana, who is already set for her own November 2017 movie, and the Patty Jenkins-helmed **Wonder Woman** has recently been in talks with Oscar-winner Nicole Kidman about joining the film. The exact role is unconfirmed at this stage, although speculation suggests Kidman as being lined up for either Amazonian Queen Hippolyta or maybe even the villainous sorceress Circe.

Over on the small screen DC projects and **Gotham** has cast some familiar rogues. Firstly, **Jurassic Park/World**'s BD Wong has landed the role of genius scientist/psychologist Hugo Strange, whilst **House of Cards**' Nathan Darrow will be playing Victor Fries/Mr. Freeze. Both characters will make their bow during Season Two of the show, which has already started airing in the US and will be hitting UK screens next year. Moving over to **Supergirl**, and the CBS show, which airs on Sky 1 in the UK, has brought in **Buffy**'s Emma Caulfield as Cameron Chase, a character straight from the comic books who has a grudge against all things extranormal. AP

ALIEN

There was news earlier this year that suggested Neill Blomkamp's **Alien** movie as having some troubles based around Ridley Scott's **Prometheus 2**, and now Blomkamp has confirmed that.

Revealing that his **Alien** film is on hold, Blomkamp said, "**Alien is kinda holding/pending Prometheus 2. So I shall be working on other things... as much as I love the xeno – and Lt Ripley**"

The **Prometheus** sequel that Blomkamp refers to is Scott's recently-christened **Alien: Paradise Lost**, which is due to start production shortly ahead of a December 31st, 2017 release. Ridley Scott himself has talked about how he has further sequels in mind which will all push **Prometheus** towards the first **Alien** movie.

This is certainly some sad news for long-time **Alien** fans as Blomkamp's film was to pick things up with Ripley and Hicks in the aftermath of **Aliens**. Whether we ever get to see that movie is now up in the air a little.

Fingers crossed that Blomkamp gets to work with those characters at some point in the future. AP

AND FINALLY...

The video game adaptations show no signs of stopping, with **The Witcher** being the latest name to add to the coming soon list. The games, the latest **The Witcher III: The Wild Hunt** being incredibly popular, were based on the stories of Andrzej Sapkowski. Animator Tomasz Baginski had announced a project in development last year, but a live-action version is now set to be in the works, with Thania St. John (**Buffy the Vampire Slayer**, **Grimm**) on screenwriting duties and promising to veer toward the original source material more than the games. A 2017 release has been pencilled in, with a TV series to follow.

+++

Not content with taking over the television world, Amazon Studios will be releasing **Drive** director Nicolas Winding Refn's next film, the supernatural horror **The Neon Demon**. It will star Elle Fanning as a model who becomes the focus of a group of beauty-obsessed LA women; so it's looking to be quite grounded in reality then, eh? Keanu Reeves is also in the cast, so colour us interested.

+++

The sci-fi novel **Pennsylvania** is being adapted into a movie by Jorgensen Pictures. Michael Bunker's story follows an Amish man, Jedidiah Troyer, who enters a program to colonise the planet of New Pennsylvania. Trouble is, he arrives in the middle of an uprising. Bunker is working on the script, but no release has been announced as yet.

TTC 419 stories by Martin Unsworth, Andrew Pollard. Edited by Martin Unsworth

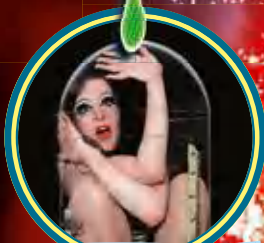
THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS

"YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS! ONE DAY SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG AND YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY YOU WERE THERE WHEN IT DID!" *Graham Norton*

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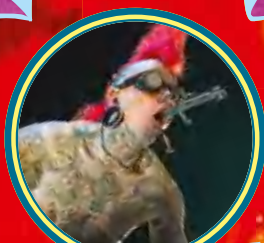
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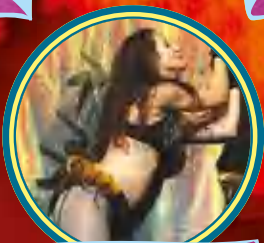
"BLOODY GOOD FUN!"

★★★★★
Time Out



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WARNING: The Circus of Horrors contains some nudity and language of an adult nature, it is not suitable for children, sissies or chavs. This show contains nuts!

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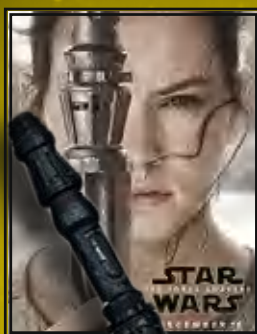
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AN AWAKENING

By Kieron Moore

No series conjures up the same level of excitement as STAR WARS – and this December, it's finally back, without a midi-chlorian in sight. STARBURST brings you up to (light) speed on everything you need to know about THE FORCE AWAKENS...

"Chewie, we're home."

It's April 16th, 2015, and the Anaheim Convention Center erupts into rapturous applause. Three simple words, initially over black before the lights come up, revealing a familiar corridor and – yep, it's them. Han Solo's not the dashing young smuggler he once was, but it's them – this is *Star Wars*.

It's not long before this trailer reaches the Internet, and film fans across the world put aside what they were planning to get done that day. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is coming. Was there ever any competition for the must-see film of 2015?

This isn't the first time *Star Wars* has returned, of course. Those of us who remember the build up to *The Phantom Menace* in 1999 will probably remember similar fan ecstasy and poring over trailers – only with dial-up Internet connections and no Twitter.

We're not going to use this as an excuse to slag the prequels off. There were some good things about them... right? And even if you don't think so, they undoubtedly kicked off a massive surge of *Star Wars* comics, books, video games (see page 22) and more. But they never captured the sheer adventure of *Star Wars* as we knew and loved it.

This time, have they got it right?

Heir to Lucas' Empire

It's common *Star Wars* lore (even if the factual evidence all contradicts itself) that creator George Lucas originally intended his trilogy to be the central act of a nine-episode saga. There'd long been fan speculation as to whether the hypothetical episodes seven through nine would ever see the light of day, with this seeming particularly unlikely when Lucas announced his retirement from blockbuster filmmaking in January 2012. A new hope came for *Star Wars* fans, however, when The Walt Disney Company purchased Lucasfilm in October that year, announcing a new trilogy of movies.

From this point, info started seeping in from our Bothan spies about the very secretive



project that was *Episode VII*. Michael Arndt was brought on as screenwriter, shortly followed by J. J. Abrams as director. These were both decisions that fans seemed happy with – Abrams had proved his sci-fi chops by bringing *Star Trek* back to the big screen, while anyone who's seen *Toy Story 3* or *Little Miss Sunshine* knows that few people can craft exciting and emotional adventures as masterfully as Michael Arndt. Worryingly, Arndt left the project in late 2013 – apparently he was taking eighteen months longer than producer Kathleen Kennedy wanted him to – but was replaced by the partnership of Abrams and Lawrence Kasdan. Larry K, as you may know, scripted *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, so probably knows what he's doing.

With the main players in place, the stage was set for us to return to the galaxy far, far away, three decades after the original trilogy ended.

A Galaxy Divided

And mirroring real life, *Episode VII*, now titled *The Force Awakens*, is set approximately thirty years after *Return of the Jedi*.

But thirty years having passed since Palpatine's death in no way means the galaxy is at peace. The villains at this time are the New-Order First Order, created out of the remains of Joy-Division the Empire. They may not have the same control over the galaxy that the Emperor commanded, but don't think for a moment they're not a threat. The new Stormtroopers are sleeker than the old, the TIE fighters glossier, and their HQ – Starkiller Base, hidden away among an icy mountain range – is armed with a new weapon capable of destroying entire star systems.

Struggling against the First Order for control of the galaxy is the Resistance, this era's version of the Rebellion. The



**STAR
THE FORCE AWAKENS
WARS**
PREVIEW



New Republic, which Expanded Universe fans will know as the regime that arose after the Battle of Endor, does exist in this rebooted canon, as confirmed by novels *Aftermath* and *Lost Stars* - though it's not clear what's happened to it by this point or how much territory each faction controls as the new trilogy begins.

Thankfully, the Resistance have a few old hands on their side. Han and Chewie are back. Leia's back. Luke's back. C-3PO and R2-D2 are back. Even Admiral Ackbar's back (so watch out for traps!). The trailers may have been coy about revealing them all so far, but your favourites will show their faces. Well, unless your favourites are Lando or Wedge Antilles, neither of whom will be appearing in Abrams' film. Billy Dee Williams has reprised his role as Han's old smuggling buddy in the *Rebels* TV series, however, and is rumoured to be game for an appearance in *Episode VIII*. Denis Lawson, however, refused to come back as crack X-wing pilot Antilles, saying it would 'bore' him. Some people, eh?

But the reason we haven't seen much of the returning characters in the trailers so far is that Abrams and co. have wanted to place the focus squarely on the new heroes. Nostalgia alone may be enough to win over some fans, but *The Force Awakens* is set to launch a new wave of *Star Wars* and bring in a new generation of devotees - and so some brand new faces were needed. See *The Light Side...* And *the Dark* for more information on just who'll be joining the line-up.

On the Trail of the Jedi

Story details have been kept safely under wraps so far (indeed, the shoot was notoriously high security, with everyone involved signing a twenty-page confidentiality clause, fifty security guards on set, and black sheets ready to cover the cast should fan-controlled drones get onto set - no, really!), but what details we do have sound intriguing... If you want to remain spoiler-free, skip the next couple of paragraphs.

On the desert planet Jakku, John Boyega's Finn, a former Stormtrooper who's deserted the First Order, meets Daisy Ridley's scavenger Rey, and soon the two of them team up with hotshot pilot Poe Dameron and his droid BB-8. One particular piece of salvage found among Jakku's ruined ships is





The Light Side...

Finn (John Boyega) – A Stormtrooper who decides he's done enough of the First Order's dirty work, finds himself a lightsaber, and trains to become a Jedi instead. Who can blame him? When we meet Finn, he's 'in incredible danger', according to Boyega, previously known for British sci-fi comedy *Attack the Block*. With him being the central hero of this new chapter of the franchise, we reckon there'll be more dangers on the way for Finn.

Rey (Daisy Ridley) – A scavenger who's quite happy with her cool speeder bike and her simple, self-sufficient life among the ship graveyards of the desert planet Jakku. That is, until Finn appears and she gets dragged along on his adventure. Ridley is comparatively unknown, having appeared in, well, ITV's *Mr. Selfridge* and some deleted scenes from *The Inbetweeners 2*, so if she impresses as Rey, this'll be a damn good kick-start to her career.

Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) – Rounding off the film's threesome of new heroes is 'the best freaking pilot in the galaxy', who's been sent on a mission by Princess Leia that leads to him encountering Finn. He's the leader of Black Squadron and, along with spherical pal BB-8, pilots a very slick new X-wing. Isaac, of *Inside Llewyn Davis* and *Ex Machina* fame, is one of the best freaking actors in Hollywood, so we have high expectations of Dameron.

BB-8 (himself) – Liked R2-D2? You ain't seen nothing yet – this 'ball droid' will be one of the most-wanted toys this Christmas. He started life as two circles Abrams doodled on a napkin, in what we can only imagine as a nerdy version of *Mad Men*'s opening scene, and is already a hit with fans after rolling onto stage at the Anaheim Celebration. Starting off as Poe Dameron's trusty astromech, BB-8 somehow gets mixed up with events on Jakku.



And the Dark...

Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) – With the black cloak and mask, the ragged cross-bladed lightsaber, and the fiery temper, you know he's trouble when he walks in. A member of the Knights of Ren and commander of the First Order, he's this episode's main villain and aims to finish what Darth Vader started. Known for HBO comedy *Girls*, Driver cuts a tall, imposing figure as Ren – but whether he'll become as iconic as Darths Vader and Maul remains to be seen.

Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis) – Kylo Ren's boss is an even more mysterious figure, and one very powerful in the dark side of the Force – the Emperor to Ren's Vader, perhaps. A motion capture character, it's appropriate that Snoke's played by Serkis, of Gollum/King Kong/Caesar fame. We've not seen any of him yet, but we've heard his voice – he's the guy in the teaser saying 'there has been an awakening' and all that jazz.

General Hux (Domhnall Gleeson) – Imagine Tarkin, but younger and more ginger. Having risen through the ranks quickly, this ruthless officer is in charge of the First Order's snowbound Starkiller Base. Gleeson (*Ex Machina*, *Frank*) looks sharp in the re-designed officer duds.

Captain Phasma (Gwendoline Christie) – Brienne of Tarth in Stormtrooper armour, she provides the First Order's muscle. Abrams came up with the character's name after seeing similarities between her chrome armour and the murderous silver ball from 1979 horror film *Phantasm*.

Maz Kanata (Lupita Nyong'o) – The *Twelve Years a Slave* star donned performance capture gear to play this CGI space pirate. Her castle, on an unknown green planet, plays host to the universe's riff-raff and appears to be this film's version of Jabba's palace. She's rumoured to have history with Han Solo.

believed to have certain significance – Luke Skywalker's first lightsaber, lost on Cloud City way back in *The Empire Strikes Back*. This most iconic of MacGuffins attracts Kylo Ren, commander of the First Order.

With the sinister Ren hot on their trail, Finn and Rey resolve to return the lightsaber to its former owner – but Luke has been missing for a long while. At some point, of course, they end up on board the Millennium Falcon and encounter Han Solo and Chewie. Cue spaceship battles,

lightsaber duels, brushes with space pirates, and all sorts of adventure across the galaxy as Finn finds out what it means to be Jedi.

The Force Returns

While we need to be careful not to pre-judge the film, it does sound like Abrams, Kasdan and everyone else involved have been making all the right decisions – the story seems like an epic adventure and the new characters could well become





instantly iconic – a big step away from the bureaucratic focus and dull characterisation that flawed the prequels [what was that you said about not slagging them off? – Ed].

Abrams seems to be making the right directorial choices, too; at the Anaheim Celebration, he discussed his approach to bringing the Star Wars galaxy back to life: "The thing that struck me, and wouldn't get out of my head, was just how real you knew and felt Star Wars was when you saw *A New Hope*. It's Star Wars. There are going to be an endless number of effects, CG and otherwise, but we needed to set a standard that was real; that felt like you knew those people were in those places... There's a sense of everything being really weathered and used. This



Star Wars – The Next Generation

THE FORCE AWAKENS is the first in a considerable new batch of STAR WARS films. What else have we got to look forward to?

ROGUE ONE (December 2016)

The first of the spin-off films will send us back to the Galactic Civil War. With Felicity Jones, Diego Luna and Riz Ahmed among a gang of rebels tasked with stealing the Death Star plans, it's set to be a gritty, militaristic tale, with grayer morality than the good vs. evil saga it leads into. You could say it's a prequel to the original trilogy... attempting that daunting task are *Godzilla* director Gareth Edwards and writers Gary Whitta (*After Earth*) and Chris Weitz (*The Golden Compass*).

EPISODE VIII (May 2017)

This instalment will carry on from where *The Force Awakens* leaves us, though J. J. Abrams won't remain in the director's chair; the sequel trilogy, like the original three films, is giving a different director a chance each time. This one's helmed – and scripted – by Rian Johnson, the man behind clever sci-fi thriller *Looper*. It'll see all of *The Force Awakens'* main cast return, alongside Benicio del Toro as a new villain and Gugu Mbatha-Raw in an unknown but significant role.

HAN SOLO SPIN-OFF (May 2018)

Next up will be the early years of everyone's favourite smuggler. We don't know who'll be donning the iconic vest (Aaron Paul? Chris Pratt? Harrison Ford in *really* good make-up?), but *The LEGO Movie's* Phil Lord and Christopher Miller will direct and Lawrence Kasdan has been working on the script. With solid above-the-line talent like that, this one has a lot of potential.

EPISODE IX (2019)

The sequel trilogy will be rounded off by director Colin Trevorrow. Hopefully he'll have upped his game since *Jurassic World*, otherwise it'll end up a comparatively clunky and uninspired third instalment. So a bit like *Return of the Jedi*, then. Expect Ewok vs. T-rex action [are you sure? – Ed].

movie takes place decades after *Jedi*, so this film needs to follow suit." The evidence suggests that he's indeed moving away from the prequels' over-reliance on plonking actors in front of a brightly-coloured sheet, with the majority of sets, as well as major new characters such as ball droid BB-8, being practically produced. That's not to say there'll be no CG - we're yet to see what Andy Serkis and Lupita Nyong'o's motion-capture characters look like, but fingers crossed they're as impressive as Serkis' recent mo-cap work in the *Planet of the Apes* films.

You didn't need this article to convince you to watch *The Force Awakens*. But you read it anyway, because it's freakin' *Star Wars* and like us, you can't get enough of it. It's an enormous task that J. J. Abrams has taken on, and one that's understandably got a lot of fans apprehensive, but if all the signs are correct, *Episode VII* could well be a bold, epic, authentic *Star Wars* movie – a movie deserving of its place in that galaxy far, far away. We could well be home.



STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS blasts onto UK screens on December 17th, and worldwide from the 18th.



CANON FODDER

By Ed Fortune

With the ever growing popularity of all things from the Rebels and the Empire, it seems that they are a great many stories to tell about that distant galaxy. But which ones are more important than others? Let's take a look at the wacky world of STAR WARS canon.



The *Star Wars* movies are a world-wide phenomenon. Pretty much anyone who has encountered the English language will have heard about the adventures of Luke, Leia, Han and Chewie. The plot of the original movies is broadly known to most of us, and for the general public, that's where it pretty much ends. But with such a great story came the demand for even more tales of *Star Wars*, and with that, came licensing.

The Lucas media machine has not stopped since the success of *A New Hope*. The general public's desire for more *Star Wars* has led to a huge number of books, cartoon series, video games, RPGs and comics being produced. Initially, none of these were regulated. As Lucas started licensing things, all of these products were simply stories from long ago in a far off distant galaxy. Each story was meant to stand alone. Over the years, the fans started demanding that 'a canon' be established. The fans demanded that George Lucas himself determine which stories were somehow more valid than others. More importantly, a level of quality control had to be set. This informally began with Timothy Zahn's 1991 novel *Heir to the Empire*. It was declared the official sequel to *Return of The Jedi* and a pyramid of canonicity was set. At the top of the hierarchy was George Lucas;

anything he created was the highest level of canon, including script notes, scribbles and even throwaway comments. In a panel with comedian Jon Stewart, Lucas joked that Obi-Wan Kenobi came from the planet Stewjon (rather than the previously canonical Coruscant). Within days, the official records were updated and the current *Star Wars* encyclopaedia updated and corrected. Below Lucas's uttering were the TV shows (*The Clone Wars*, specifically), then tie-in media like books and comics that connected the prequel movies with the originals (this made up the bulk of the Expanded Universe and the game settings). Below that was anything else, with 'what-if' style stories being officially not canon.

Or to put it another way, the movies mattered more than the TV series, and the TV series mattered more than the video games, books, etc. Yoda's appearance in *Soulcalibur IV* absolutely didn't count. Mara Jade, an Expanded Universe heroine who would go on to marry Luke Skywalker in the books (and is much loved by many fans), barely rated above *Star Wars Angry Birds* and it would only take a single word from George Lucas to make the character a non-person. To put it simply: the whole thing was a huge mess of inconsistent ideas and missed opportunities.

When Disney purchased Lucasfilm and the rights to the entire *Star Wars* franchise, it

was inevitable that were going to streamline it all. On the one hand, Disney now owned a huge body of work, filled with wondrous space opera and amazing ideas. On the other hand, there was simply too much material for Disney to exploit commercially. The general public would have no desire to see movies based on old *Star Wars* books that were never intended to be filmed. In the Old Canon, we had Jedi bunny rabbits (called Kushiban) and Chewbacca getting killed by having a whole planet dropped on him. We also had complex myth cycles and clever explanations for everything from lightsabers to hyperspace.

Disney did two things; they threw out the bulk of the cheesy excesses of Lucas' old management, and hired a team of goldminers to sift through the dross looking for the good stuff. These brave people are known as The Story Group. It includes former Lucasfilm employee Leland Chee, and his job title is 'Keeper of The Holocron'. (In *Star Wars*, Holocrons are cube shaped objects that project 3D videos. Sort of like TED talks for Jedi.) A vast chunk of Old Canon stuff are described as *Star Wars Legends*; these stories are now just that; stories from the *Star Wars* universe. They aren't the 'true telling' of the *Star Wars* world. If this feels a bit silly, well it is. Art is objective. But it matters because stories from the Legends range are unlikely to be developed as they aren't regarded as commercially strong.



Disney's new canon is straight forward. As far as Disney is concerned, the official *Star Wars* stories are quite narrow. They include the original six movies and the new movies made by Disney such as *The Force Awakens*. Also included are *The Clone Wars* and *Rebels* TV series, the newer Marvel comics and all *Star Wars* novels from *Star Wars: A New Dawn* onwards. Let's unpack that a little further...

By the six movies, they mean the prequels and the original trilogy. Sorry trivia fans, the low-budget Ewok movies *Caravan of Courage* and *Battle for Endor* don't count. But then they never did. It should be noted that Disney are likely to release the original 'cuts' of the movies. This would mean that Han would officially have shot first. Or not. Depends what edit you're watching. Which makes Greedo the sci-fi blockbuster version of Schrödinger's cat.

The new movie is canon, of course. As are the various other planned movies. The point of this entire exercise to clear away the previous stories to make room for these expensive mega-movies, after all.

The Clone Wars and its spin-off of sorts, *Star Wars Rebels*, are both computer generated kids cartoons that drew heavily from the Old Canon for inspiration. This means that the *Clone Wars* version of how a lightsaber is made (which borrowed

heavily from the table top RPG and the video games) is officially canon. It also means that Darth Maul is still alive and well and running about on robot legs. It also means that Chopper the grumpy droid is totally a thing. You never know, he may even appear in a movie to sass R2-D2.

Marvel comics produced some pretty wild *Star Wars* books back in the seventies. Those aren't canon. The new Marvel books are, and they've only been out for a year or so at this point. Marvel have hired some of the best writers and artists in the industry today including Mark Waid, Kieron Gillen, Adi Granov, etc. The new books tell 'personal journeys' of the main *Star Wars* cast, and they cross over at key plot points. They're very well curated and though they aren't really filled with revelations, they seem to be a solid replacement for the old Dark Horse books produced during the dark days of George Lucas.

The newly launched book range are perhaps the most controversial of this brave new world. The books from the Old Canon have had decades to gather a cult following and they are a vocal core of people who are more than a little bit peeved that their favourite books are no longer as important as they once were. *A New Dawn* is a prequel to the *Rebels* TV series. It was well received. *Tarkin*, *Heir to the Jedi*, and *Lords of the Sith* all focused

on characters from the Original Trilogy. They went down well, especially *Heir to the Jedi* (which featured a young and horny Luke Skywalker) and *Lords of the Sith* (which featured the Emperor being a murder machine). However, all of these books suffered from grumbling by some fans. Chuck Wendig's *Star Wars Aftermath* suffered the biggest wave of criticism, mostly from people who hadn't actually read it and proudly said so on the Internet.

This is because the most popular books from the Old Canon dealt with a post-*Return of the Jedi* world. Now that *The Force Awakens* has knocked all that on the head, this means that these old books are obsolete. They're still good stories, they're just not as special as they were once were. *Star Wars Aftermath* is the first official book of the new canon that deals with matters post-*Return of the Jedi*. Despite smashing records and selling very well, concerted effort from some fans seem determined to attack the book, even though all the protesting does is raise its profile and sell more copies.

Disney's careful handling of this new order of *Star Wars* stories is very promising. They seem determined to keep the magic of the original movies and the genius of the spin off media, without bogging it all down in decades of development. Time will tell, but it's looking pretty good so far.





PLAY OR PLAY NOT: THE BEST OF STAR WARS VIDEO GAMES

BY KIERON MOORE



THOUGH WE'RE ALL WAITING FOR THE FORCE TO AWAKEN, THERE'S ANOTHER BIG STAR WARS RELEASE COMING - THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED NEW BATTLEFRONT GAME. SO TURN ON YOUR TARGETING COMPUTERS AS STARBUAST LOOKS BACK AT THE DEFINING VIDEO GAMES FROM THAT GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (1982)

Worth a place on this list for the achievement of being the first video game with *Star Wars* in the title, the Atari 2600 and Commodore 64 take on *The Empire Strikes Back* wasn't really a full adaptation of the beloved sequel, but an arcade version of the Battle of Hoth.

This didn't stop some fans finding hours of fun, of course, and nor did the impossibility of actually winning the battle. Taking the role of about five pixels which apparently represented a snowspeeder, it took 48 hits from your cannon to take down an AT-AT – no shortcuts with tying up their legs here! If the new *Battlefront's* Hoth level is just too realistic for you, this retro version is available for free online.



SUPER STAR WARS (1992)

Super Star Wars, however, allowed fans to play through the whole story of *A New Hope*. With, err, some additions, including a level where Luke fights a giant lava beast while attempting to rescue R2-D2 from the Jawa sandcrawler. We must have forgotten that scene from the film.

Available for the SNES, the platformer was loved by fans and critics alike, with chances to play as Han and Chewie as well as Luke, plus some vehicle sections, putting the player behind the controls of a landspeeder and an X-wing.

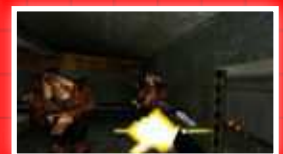
It was followed by 'Super' adaptations of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*, in 1993 and '94, and has since been ported to the Wii.



DARK FORCES (1995)

Based on the *Doom* engine, *Dark Forces* was not only a solid first-person shooter but was also the first *Star Wars* game to really carve into new storytelling territory. Players took on the role of Kyle Katarn, a Stormtrooper who defects to the Rebel Alliance (perhaps that's where J. J. Abrams got the idea for Finn...) and uncovers a new kind of robotic Stormtrooper masterminded by the fearsome General Rom Mohc.

The *Dark Forces* story was developed over three sequels; this series ended up changing its name to become the *Jedi Knight* series, as the games added the big thing *Dark Forces* was missing – Katarn unlocking his latent Force powers and becoming a Jedi meant we could throw Stormtroopers around with wild abandon.





ROGUE SQUADRON (1998)

Flying an X-wing was rarely as fun as it was in the Nintendo 64 and PC game *Rogue Squadron*, which followed the Rebel Alliance's best pilots as they ran dangerous missions against the Empire. It was more of a fun arcade-style flyer than the more serious sims of the *X-wing* and *TIE Fighter* games, and attracted a lot of fans with its variety of craft available, all easy to zip, zoom and roll around in and yet all with their own quirks.

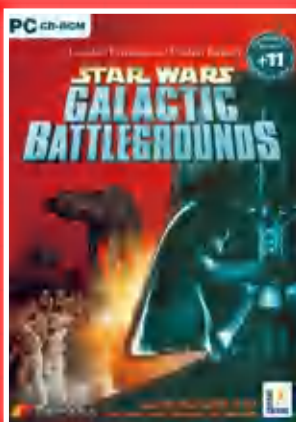
It was also the technically most advanced *Star Wars* game yet – if you shelled out for the N64's Expansion Pak, you could upgrade the resolution to 640 x 480 and take on the Empire in beautiful standard definition. Which was high definition for 1998.

Two sequels, both for the GameCube, followed in 2001 and 2003.

GALACTIC BATTLEFIELDS (2000)

Fans of the *Age of Empires* games can spend hundreds of hours building up their armies and plotting the best methods to gain territory. But other gamers may get bored of the ancient civilisations they depict – they don't have AT-ATs! *Galactic Battlefields* (or should it have been called *Age of Galactic Empires*?) fixed that problem, nicking Microsoft's *AoE* engine and whacking *Star Wars* stuff all over it.

There were several factions you could play as, each with their own campaign, including the Empire, the Rebel Alliance, and, erm, the Gungans. Not the most popular choice. A later expansion pack added the clone and separatist armies, while the level editor ensured that there was always more galaxy-conquering fun to be had.



JEDI STARFIGHTER (2002)

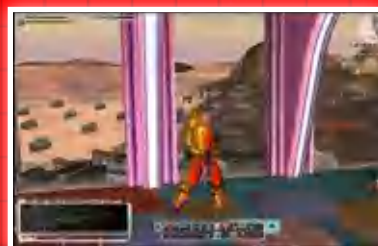
1999's release of *The Phantom Menace* led to a wave of tie-in games, some better than others, and 2002's *Attack of the Clones* did the same. *Jedi Starfighter* was perhaps the best of the lot.

A sequel to the comparatively clunky *Phantom Menace* tie-in *Starfighter*, this followed Jedi Master Adi Gallia as she teams up with a band of space pirates in order to investigate a shady Trade Federation plot, leading to a climax at the Battle of Geonosis. Putting you in the pilot seat of a fighter much like Obi-Wan's *Episode II* model, *Jedi Starfighter* offered the most refined and entertaining space combat yet – plus, you could use Force powers against the pesky droid starfighters!

GALAXIES (2003)

A MMORPG in which you created your own character in the world of the original trilogy, and could fight for the Empire or the Rebellion, forge your own path as a bounty hunter, or even become an expert in interstellar cookery – *Star Wars Galaxies* had the potential to become the ultimate intergalactic gaming experience.

Sadly, it wasn't to be, as the game had more bugs than a Geonosian hive. For those who got it all working, though, there was great fun to be had – well, until a range of controversial 'enhancements' from developers Sony Online Entertainment. Most notably, the game had started off with it almost impossible to become a Jedi, but after pressure from LucasArts, Sony made it much easier – which resulted in an anachronistic amount of lightsabers swinging around that many felt actually ruined the fun. The *Galaxies* servers finally closed down in 2011.



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC (2003)

Four thousand years before *A New Hope*, the Sith Empire is at war with the Republic. You wake up on board a Republic ship under attack by the ruthless Darth Malak. Over the course of the game, you build up a gang of spacefaring companions as you become a Jedi and investigate the mysterious Star Forge.

Often regarded by fans as the defining *Star Wars* game, *Knights of the Old Republic* is a brilliantly crafted RPG that shines on the power of its storytelling. By being set so far away from the movies, it allows itself creative freedom to tell a story epic in scale; a story which, with its ragtag band of misfits journeying through space in a bucket of bolts, captures the essence of *Star Wars* perfectly. There's humour, high stakes, plenty of interesting planets, and a twist that rivals "*I am your father*".

It led to a sequel, 2004's *The Sith Lords*, and a spin-off comic. They're both fantastic. If you only play one *Star Wars* game, make it *Knights of the Old Republic*.



BATTLEFRONT (2004)

Perhaps the exact opposite of *Knights of the Old Republic*, neither *Battlefront* nor its 2005 sequel are known for adding anything to the stories of the *Star Wars* galaxy. Sure, they both attempted some sort of campaign mode, but we played them for the multiplayer (or indeed, the pseudo-multiplayer with AI enemies for those of us who hadn't worked out how to get our PS2s online yet).

Because sometimes all you want on a lazy Sunday afternoon is to headshot some battle droids or to get into an AT-AT and stamp out the Rebel scum. The sequel added hero characters, so lucky players would get a turn as Mace Windu, Luke Skywalker, or General Grievous (remember him?) – the ludicrous advantage they gave you was all part of the smashes, killy fun.

The third instalment in the *Battlefront* series languished in development hell – until recently. But more on that later...



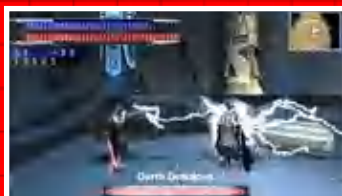
LEGO STAR WARS (2005)

Another major shift in tone here. You could say the LEGO games are just for kids, but we all know that's not true – *LEGO Star Wars* provided fun for all ages with its irreverent take on the prequel trilogy. With an impressive collection of playable characters and a wicked sense of humour, it even made bits of *The Phantom Menace* joyous. The best bit was watching your characters fall apart into little bricks every time you fell foul of a bad guy's lightsaber.

A second game gave the original trilogy the same treatment in 2006; these games are also significant in that they kicked off a long series of LEGO franchise tie-ins – after *LEGO Star Wars* came *LEGO Lord of the Rings*, *Batman*, *Harry Potter* and more.



THE FORCE UNLEASHED (2008)



LucasArts really wanted this one to be big, with it headlining an ambitious 'multimedia project' that also included a novel, comic, and toy line, and advertising it as an important new chapter in the Star Wars saga – with no new films on the way, this was the best we'd get. The story followed Darth Vader's 'secret apprentice', who helps wipe out remaining Jedi but comes to question his loyalties, and particular emphasis was put on the amazing Force powers you'd get to use.

Unfortunately, it wasn't quite as amazing as hyped up to be.

The gameplay is rather generic hack-and-slash fare, with a dodgy targeting system and nothing that really feels like you're 'unleashing' the Force – taking it for a sedate, controlled walk, maybe. The story's not that good, either.

Despite (spoilers!) killing off its lead character, it still got a sequel, two years later, starring his clone. These weren't LucasArts' most creative few years.

THE OLD REPUBLIC (2011)

OK, so the first attempt at a *Star Wars* MMORPG ended up down the proverbial trash compacter. But this one, from the *Knights of the Old Republic* developers and set in their 4000 years pre-films playground, was bound to be a success, right?

Well, actually, yes. Despite criticisms over its repetitive quests ('kill X amount of enemy Y... great, do it again!'), its focus on story develops *KotOR*'s intriguing corner of the *Star Wars* galaxy, and compared to *Galaxies*, the game actually works. Which is useful.

The Old Republic is still going strong, with new expansion packs being developed – despite not being officially canon anymore!



A RE-AWAKENING...

You may have noticed the widening gaps in years between the games we've chosen. Indeed, it does seem that the time when the prequel films were being released was also the time when the best games were being developed, and there's been a dearth in recent years. Disney's purchase of Lucasfilm didn't initially appear to help, with the promising 'gritty' bounty hunter game *Star Wars 1313* being cancelled. Nevertheless, with a new bunch of films on the horizon, game developers may once again be coming up with some very interesting *Star Wars* titles.

The first in this new wave is *Star Wars Battlefront*, a reimagining of the much-loved shooter games featuring bigger maps, better graphics, and downloadable content tying into *The Force Awakens*. By the time you're reading this, you may have already played *Battlefront* – here's hoping it's as good as the beta test reports promise it to be!

After this, there's a currently untitled game in development from *Dead Space* developers Visceral Games; while we're careful not to get too excited about projects we know next to nothing about, we do know that Amy Hennig, writer of the brilliant *Uncharted* series, is acting as creative director, and Visceral have teased us with *Millennium Falcon*-related imagery. Could we be getting a Han Solo adventure à la Nathan Drake? It's very uncertain, but... never tell us the odds.

From X-wing dogfights to chopping off Darth Maul's little LEGO torso, *Star Wars* games have given us countless hours of interstellar fun. With interest in the franchise about to rocket up again, let's hope they continue to do so.



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT is out now. Read our review next issue.

STORE WARS

BY JACK BOTTOMLEY

STARBURST

STAR WARS

There has been an awakening... in the shelves of your local stores... can you feel it? That's right, *Star Wars* is here and the force is with it. In all the time that STARBURST has been looking at the weird and wonderful merchandise of various film franchises, *Star Wars* was always going to be here someday and, ahead of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, we decided that now was the time. *Star Wars* is a retail juggernaut that changed the way movies are sold and taught us to never passionately kiss someone until you know all the facts. *Star Wars* products have expanded the backstories of characters, from IG-88's droid revolution to Sy Snootles' spice addiction, and broadened their appeal. So how on Naboo are we going to try and consolidate over 30 years of gear into one feature? We don't mind telling you all that it's been our hardest ever merch feature, but as a wise green fellow once said, "*There is no try*". So, hop aboard our retailing sail barge as we explore the good, the bad, and the downright mad merchandise to come from a galaxy far, far away...

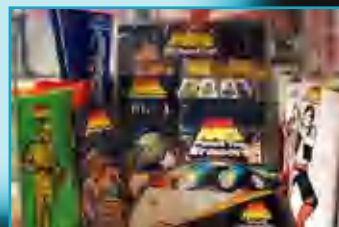
STAR WARS EARLY BIRD CERTIFICATE PACKAGE (1977, Kenner)

We've limited the amount of figures because we could fill 419 issues of STARBURST with the 3¾ inch toys *Star Wars* has spawned. That said, we must acknowledge the first... OK, the *Star Wars* Early Bird Certificate Package is not a figure package per se. Unprepared for the demand that George Lucas' blockbuster would bring for toys, Kenner couldn't produce a toy line in time for Christmas. So they offered this printed stand and certificate gift set, allowing the recipient first dibs on the first figures (pictured on the package) in 1978. A lot of kids back then may have felt like force choking parents after opening an empty present, although nowadays the Early Bird Package is worth in excess of \$40,000 in mint condition.



STAR WARS SCHOOL SET (1978, Helix)

School is a natural part of life but the pressure of spending time with some half-witted, scruffy looking nerf herders was alleviated by this *Star Wars* School Set released in the UK by Helix. Thanks to Helix, you could take the magic of George Lucas' space adventure into class with the likes of character pencil top erasers, a maths set and more. Bullies be damned, they were just jealous of your multi-coloured Death Star pencil sharpener!



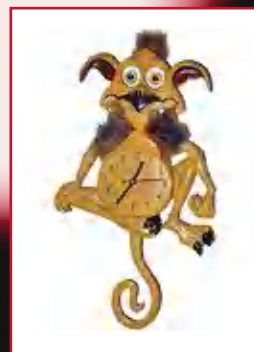
TAUNTAUN SLEEPING BAG (2009, ThinkGeek)

In 2009, ThinkGeek ran an April Fools' Day item, a tauntaun sleeping bag - parodying the scene in *The Empire Strikes Back* in which Han uses a dead tauntaun's innards to keep a delirious Luke warm in the plummeting Hoth temperatures. Funny right? Well not so, because the forces that be (geddit?) were urged to make this joke item a reality when the demand spiked to crazy levels. It was a backfire but one that came to pay off for fans and the site alike, plus no tauntauns were harmed in the making of this fun - and less smelly - way to keep warm.



SALACIOUS CRUMB CLOCK (2015, Star Wars Celebration)

Remember that cackling little bugger that ate C-3PO's eye and ripped on Han Solo in *Return of the Jedi*? Well, exclusively available at the 2015 Anaheim *Star Wars* Celebration was this really quite unsettling wall clock modelled on the Kowakian monkey-lizard jester's wizened little features. As it ticks, its eyes move, and while the design is faithful fun, some may find it as disconcerting as a romantic exchange between Anakin and Padmé.



STAR WARS AND OTHER GALACTIC FUNK ALBUM (1977, Millennium Records)

Music and *Star Wars* has co-existed in perfect harmony, mostly thanks to the incomparable John Williams, but there've been other funkier examples like RSO Records' 1980 Christmas single 'What Can You Get A Wookiee for Christmas (When He Already Owns A Comb)'. However, the first was this curio 1977 album release. The cover has sod all to do with *Star Wars* and is a way too bright pic of two futuristic folk doing an early example of twerking. Meco's album featured disco remixes of Williams' music. Unbelievably, *Star Wars* theme/Cantina Band topped the billboard Hot 100 at one point - surely Figrin D'an and the Modal Nodes weren't happy, call Corusant solicitors!



JAR JAR MOUTH CANDY (1999, Cap Candy)

And the award for the vilest *Star Wars* product goes to Cap Candy's *Phantom Menace*-celebrating Jar Jar Mouth Candy. The garish product basically had kids moose kiss the hapless Gungan for a sugary rush. Wrong on so many levels and not because it involves the most reviled character in *Star Wars* history, but just *because*.

Cap Candy was clearly on the (Qui-Gon) Gin when they designed this. Meesa no think so.



DAGOBAH FROG HABITAT (2013, Uncle Milton)

And you thought the Death Star Birdhouse and R2-D2 Aquarium were odd animal-related uses of the *Star Wars* license? Well, how about this neatly designed, but strange amphibian habitat. Uncle Milton's Frog Habitat, based on Yoda's swamp hideaway on Dagobah, gave kids the chance to give their pet frogs their very own little 'slimy mudhole'.



R2-D2 AND CHEWBACCA STUFFED TOYS (1977, Kenner)

Stuffed toys are ten-a-penny nowadays but in 1977, Kenner released the first in what would be years of popular characters being realised as stuffed toys. R2-D2 was the first in stores, and even made a noble little squeaking noise, which made it sound more like a dog toy, but hey ho! R2 is likely the most merchandised character in the *Star Wars* saga, just ahead of Vader, but many will have loved the very shaggy and cute Chewbacca model more. The Kashyyyk-born lug has never looked sweeter.



AT-AT ZIMMER FRAME (2012, Keith Greenstein)

Fans of the *Star Wars* universe come in all shapes, sizes, and ages. So one Flickr user from Atlanta thought that the gap in the older *Star Wars* fan market should be filled. Enter this barmy but fun bit of gear that saw the zimmer frame spruced up with some AT-AT Transport legs. It's a neat idea but if it ever catches on, exercise caution - granny could be lethal if she decides to kit it out with blasters too. All of a sudden, serious Imperial shit could go down in those back garden Hoth battle recreations.



UNCLE OWEN AND AUNT BERU CHARRED REMAINS (2014, Phoenix Customs)

Ah, Owen and Beru. One has Blue milk, the other has, err, power converters? Still, for their simple living, they made Luke the man he is, until they ended up Owen baked and (Be)ruined at the hands of the Empire. Meaning Owen and Beru must have been crap at dodging because, contrary to Obi-Wan's comments, Stormtroopers aren't known for precise shooting. In all seriousness though, this Owen and Beru burnt skeletal remains toy was thought to be a joke until Phoenix Customs actually created the figure.



MAX REBO MUSIC DOLL (2015, Underground Toys)

Many changes over the years to the original series by George Lucas have left fans foaming like rabid Rancors. One such change was the replacement of *Lapti Nek* with *Jedi Rocks* in *Return of the Jedi*. No? Let us explain, the Max Rebo band were Jabba's cabaret band led by the Ortolan (a blue elephant that feeds through its fingers) organ player Max Rebo. In the original version, they played a song called *Lapti Nek*, which was replaced by a Jazz song called *Jedi Rocks* in the 1997 remastered film. Well if you curse the change, this adorable Max Rebo toy (from Anaheim's *Star Wars* Celebration 2015)

is for you, as it plays a verse of *Lapti Nek* when squeezed. Oh Max, you may have signed a lifetime contract in exchange for all you can eat, but we love ya!



MILLENNIUM FALCON (1979, Kenner)

When it comes to *Star Wars*, even the spaceships and transports of the films have taken on a new life, becoming characters in themselves. One of the first vehicular toys was Kenner's aspirational Sonic Controlled Landspeeder (1979) - today worth up to £1300. However, the magnum opus is the Millennium Falcon! And Kenner's 1979 *The Empire Strikes Back* Millennium Falcon is one of the most fondly remembered pieces there ever was. The 23-inch toy opened up to allow your 3¾ inch figures inside and boasted swivelling laser canons, movable landing gears and a secret false floor compartment. This is no piece of junk; in fact, the toy is a collectors' favourite, worth around £2,000 in good order.



GENERAL GRIEVOUS TOBACCO PIPE (2015, Etsy)

General Grievous, with his intriguing backstory, ability to duel with 4 lightsabers and chesty cough, was one of the more fascinating *Star Wars* villains, despite acting as a side character in *Revenge of the Sith*. So to celebrate the unique Jedi-massacring Kaleesh separatist, here is this handmade General Grievous Tobacco Pipe from Etsy. Although thinking about it, the pipe is a bit insensitive. Remember that the good General perished in a ball of flames, so a smoking implement isn't the best tie-in. Though it could've been worse, they could've done Grievous Gaviscon... y'know, because of his heart burning? Too much?



SPACE SLUG OVEN MITT (2011, ThinkGeek)

With the existence of Wampa rugs and R2-D2 toilet brushes, we've realised you could easily kit out a house entirely with *Star Wars* gear, but some items even we couldn't fathom and this space slug oven mitt is one of them. Geeky in its design - it even has a little Millennium Falcon in the mouth - the chances of successfully negotiating a tray of hot buns is 3,720 to 1 but this item says, "Never tell me the odds".



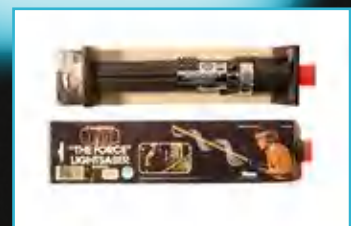
STAR WARS WHIP (2013, Etsy)

Believe us when we tell you, sifting through *Star Wars* sex toys is childhood-damaging. The lightsaber dildos and various ways in which popular characters have been sexualised goes from being funny to about as comfortable as listening to Boss Nass recite Shakespeare. Some of said items are available at Etsy and the most impressive (my god, what are we saying?) is probably this lightsaber butt lasher. Also available in the same ballpark are lightsaber canes (perhaps that's how they do things at the Jedi Temple) and Darth Vader paddles (clearly Anakin was into the rough stuff)... we'd call it brand spanking new but that's corny even for us.



THE FORCE LIGHTSABER (1982, Kenner)

Everybody loves Master Replicas' FX Lightsabers, but let's face it, we all at some point get the urge just to smack each other with lightsabers. And while Kenner's first lightsaber toy in 1978 was the problematic inflatable lightsaber, they stayed on target with this improved plastic lightsaber toy that made authentic (kinda) lightsaber sound effects. Of course, they proved very popular and over the years the lightsaber toys have only improved in look and design with Hasbro's 1999 double-bladed Darth Maul lightsaber (recalled due to a design fault that burnt some people, picky picky!) and 2014's Inquisitor (the bad guy from Season One of Disney XD's *Star Wars Rebels*) Spinning Lightsaber being good examples.



BOBA FETT FOOD MIXER (2013, tommyfilth)

Boba Fett may have met his onscreen end thanks to a jet pack cock-up, but before being devoured by the sandy orifice (no giggling) of the Sarlacc, he'd won over legions of fans. Many of those fans might celebrate their love of the battle-worn Mandalorian with a jet pack backpack or helmet, but what about... the Boba Fett Food Mixer! Custom created using a repainted (the colour of Fett's armour) eBay food mixer and aimed at those who own the *Star Wars* cookbook (it's real). In fairness, there aren't many characters, Dexter Jettster (the *Attack of the Clones* café owner) aside, that scream out for a foodie tie-in, but Boba is a particularly obscure choice. I want the mixture nicely whisked... no disintegrations.



R2-D2 SOY SAUCE BOTTLE (2014, Heart Art Collection)

The lovable little astromech R2-D2 has been used to sell everything from soap to meat smokers, but of all the uses for the little fella, a soy sauce bottle is pretty unexpected. Perhaps he had some in those 'busting innards'; we'd have loved to see him squirt soy sauce at a Stormtrooper! There may be stranger items out there, but with them we wouldn't have been able to say... wait for it... the sauce is strong in this one! Eh? Eh? Ok, we'll get our robes and go...



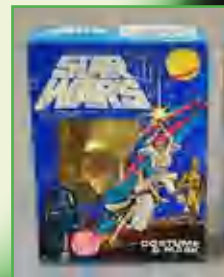
ROCKET FIRING BOBA FETT PROTOTYPE (1979, Kenner)

This infamous Boba Fett toy, ahead of his big screen debut in *Empire*, is legendary. We know Fett, like his dad Jango, is one bad mo-fo, but this toy literally was deadly, or was it? The urban legend is that the Mattel *Battlestar Galactica* toy, which led to the death of a child, urged Kenner to drastically restructure their 'much promoted' Rocket Firing Fett. In reality, Kenner exercised caution before all that even occurred as the L-slot firing mechanism could accidentally fire and the replacement J-slot figure was even worse as it could easily splinter. So at the last minute, the rocket firing figures were abandoned and never officially released. The urban legend behind the figure has made it the most notorious *Star Wars* toy ever. The L-Slot and J-Slot prototypes are uncommon, though not impossible find, but this figure can set a collector back by \$100,000 in some cases!



STAR WARS COSTUME RANGE (1977-8, Ben Cooper)

For many kids, the joy of portraying your onscreen heroes was accomplished with a big dollop of imagination and usually towels or some other such household material. However, it is arguable that *Star Wars* and its mass marketing led an evolution in playing dress up and long before the voice changers and replica masks, many happy memories came from Ben Cooper's range of *Star Wars* character costumes. Dated as they may be today, many will still smile like a Cheshire cat (or should that be Nexu) at the sight of Ben Cooper vintage *Star Wars* outfits (from Chewie to Stormtroopers).



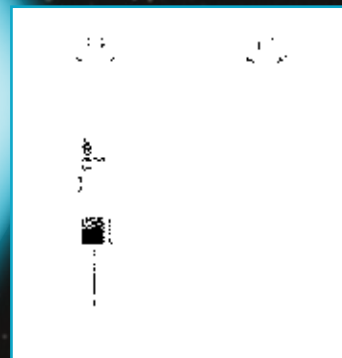
PRINCESS LEIA TAMPONS (2015, Galactic Trash)

Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and pop down to the ladies' aisle, you're my only hope... This joke item was sold by the fans at the Galactic Trash Tumblr page to see to what extent the *Star Wars* brand could be used to sell anything. That being said, they are proving a point by selling items like the Jabba the Hutt condom and remains of Alderaan rock. This may be an unlicensed product but there is, if you look around, a Jar Jar Binks Tampon Case from Stylage Mileage... words fail us.



LIGHTSABER AIR SICKNESS BAG (2005, Virgin Atlantic)

Revenge of the sick, Barf Sidious, Puke Skywalker, anyone? Back when the circle was about to become complete with the 'final' *Star Wars* film *Revenge of the Sith*, promotion was running wild. So came this bizarre example of advertising, whereby Virgin Atlantic flights had sickness bags garnished with instructions on how to use a lightsaber. Well, we can't speak for everyone, but when you are spewing your ring up at altitude, the first thing to come to mind is defo lightsaber etiquette.



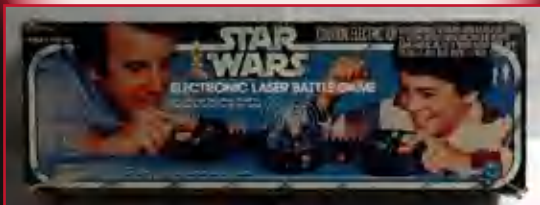
DARK FORCE COFFEE MAKERS (2012, Nestle)

"Thank the maker", well go on then, thank them... When Kylo Ren said in *The Force Awakens* trailer he would finish what Vader started, we don't imagine he meant preparing hot beverages. From Death Star Tea Infusers (Google it) to Vader's Roast Coffee, your drink needs are met in a galaxy far, far away. However, the classiest drink-making products are these Dark Force Coffee makers that come in good/bad guy colours. As silly as it may be, this is perfect for the sci-fi loving caffeine consumer that likes their coffee a little on the dark side. Cue mechanic breathing sound. Wait, they are Japan only? Nooooooooooooo!



ELECTRONIC LASER BATTLE GAME (1978, Kenner)

Kenner's Bop Bags and Movie Viewers are all well and good, but in 1978, a really exciting early example of a developed toy was their Electronic Laser Battle Game. Rudimentary by today's standards, this vintage toy was an advanced and fun reaction-based game, seeing who could get to the Death Star first. You could while away the afternoon arguing merrily over whether little Han got there first - actually, best not get into debates like that, they can get messy... just let it slide or failing that, let the Wookiee win.

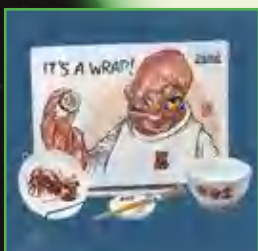


ADMIRAL ACKBAR SUSHI SET

(2015, Star Wars Celebration)

There is some line or other that the fish-headed rebel admiral Ackbar (who returns in *The Force Awakens*) says in *Return of the Jedi* that has led to his on-going popularity over the years, but we can't remember the exact line. Anyway... Here is a barmy piece of merchandise that combines the fish-based delicacy with some of the *Star Wars* saga's aquatic species of Mon Calamari. Your common sense can't repel crazy merch of this magnitude!

This geeky and well-designed sushi set certainly corners a gap in the seafood market, or as Ackbar might say... "It's a gap!"



C-3PO 'X-RATED' TRADING CARD

(1977, Topps Company)

Poor old C-3PO, his obtuse little friend R2-D2 gets all the glory, whereas he's the brunt of the jokes - see Sigma's 1981 Tape Dispenser. However, Topps' rude blunder is the droid's most embarrassing moment. The mistaken #207 card saw the protocol droid stood in a very... excited state - surely that chemical bath wasn't *that* good!

The X-Rated trading card went on sale but when noticed, Topps tried to (e)rectify the situation with a reprinted version. The story behind this gold dong disaster veers from a disgruntled employee to Lucasfilm's claim that a piece of Anthony Daniels' costume came loose. Although a commonly held belief is that it was altered as a joke between workers and accidentally put into production. It's certainly enough to arouse suspicion...

HAN SOLO IN TRENCHCOAT FIGURE (1984, Kenner)

Han Solo is without doubt one of the most awesome characters in cinema. So what do you do with a character that every kid wanted to play? That's right, you make action figures! What you don't do is put said figures in trench coats so big they look like some kind of galactic street flasher. The figure is meant to recreate Han Solo in his Endor battle gear, but instead makes him look like a dodgy watch seller that even Watto would tell to piss off. Whoever at Kenner thought this toy looked great clearly had Luke's training helmet on with the blast shield down. "Your eyes can deceive you, don't trust them", no DO!



DARTH VADER SAMURAI (2005, Yoshitoku)

From the moment he walked through that blasted-open doorway in the Tantive IV Rebel Blockade Runner with cool sounding asthma and an even better looking black outfit, Darth Vader cemented himself as a legend. So finding a way to make Darth Vader even more awesome is no easy feat. However, Yoshitoku accomplished that very feat in 2005 with this wonderful model of Darth Vader's armour reimagined as a Japanese Samurai. The look is unique, the presentation immaculate, and the backdrop evokes the Mustafar setting in *Revenge of the Sith*.



GLUESTICK WITH EWOK (1983, Palitoy)

Arts and crafts naturally link with the *Star Wars* universe, as the saga celebrates creativity. So through all the Sun Catchers and paint-by-numbers sets you can understand the connection. However, this oddly allied product from Palitoy is baffling. Why a gluestick was sold with a little Ewok toy we'll never know. Do Ewoks make the stuff? Must make a right arse-up of their fur if so.



STAR KNIGHT (Unknown)

"*Begun the clone war has*", well if this bootleg is anything to go by, the war is over before it begins. Star Knight, star bright, I wish I may, I wish I might, have this toy taken from my sight. This hilariously illogical bootleg sees a Vader figure (that's so bulbous it looks like Darth ate all the pies at the Emperor's birthday bash) plonked on top of a police motorcycle. Can't remember that in *Empire*, plus if Vader was a cop surely attacking one's own son (sorry, spoiler alert!) with a lightsaber would be considered police brutality, would it not? I find your lack of continuity disturbing...



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DRESSED TO KILL

Words: Jon Towlson

It's fair to say a lot of STAR WARS' success relies on the talent behind the make-up and costumes bringing the creatures from a Galaxy Far, Far Away to life. TIM DRY is one such actor. With the release of the new instalment of the saga, we spent time to find out about one of the actors who portrayed characters in the previous chapter of the story, RETURN OF THE JEDI. Along the way we learn about Jabba the Hutt and, erm, extraterrestrial jizz...



Tim Dry as a
Mon Calamari Officer

Actor/mime/musician/writer Tim Dry has had a pretty remarkable (not to say eclectic) career. As well as featured roles in *Star Wars: Episode VI: Return of the Jedi* ('J'Quille – Whiphid' and a 'Mon Calamari Officer') and cult British sci-fi/horror flick from 1983, *Xtro*, he performed as one half of robotic mime/music duo *Tik and Tok* (supporting Gary Numan, Ultravox, and Duran Duran on tour). He wrote about his Jedi experiences in *Continuum*, and also published his first novella, *Ricochet*, to great acclaim.

STARBURST: You have some amazing stories to tell about *Return of the Jedi* and the whole *Star Wars* phenomenon in your book *Continuum*. How did you get the Jedi job?

Tim Dry: Desmond Jones, my mentor and mime teacher for the previous six years, phoned me out of the blue sometime in the first week of January 1982 and asked if I was available to come to his school this coming Saturday to audition for a major Hollywood movie. An audition? "It's for a sci-fi movie. In fact, you'll be meeting one of the co-producers of *Star Wars*. He's looking for some mimes to play creatures in the new sequel." "WHAT? You cannot be serious!" He was. This was about as big as a big fantasy thing gets. I mean - ME, auditioning for *Star Wars*!

What was the audition like?

Des was there, of course, and also a guy who looks important, but casual in a film producer kind of way. It transpires after an introduction that this gent is the legendary Robert Watts and, yes, he is indeed at the top of the producer tree for his work

on the preceding two *Star Wars* movies and even more so for this new one. And, if those three weren't enough by themselves, he'd also got a modest little flick called *Raiders of the Lost Ark* under his production belt, too. Therefore, by 1982, he was 'Un Grand Fromage' of the first order. In spite of this stellar Hollywood status, Mr Watts came across to us as friendly, open and still excited about it all.

Robert tells us that this is the follow-up to *The Empire Strikes Back* and that we would be auditioning to play members of Jabba the Hutt's entourage in his subterranean palace. Jabba, being a kind of Galactic 'Kray Brothers in one' kind of guy, has his own dodgy empire of wheelers and dealers, and is naturally keen to surround himself with some villainous alien back-up. And that's where we come in. Or some of us anyway.

They're looking for about nine performers for this specific location and the production team is going to have to choose from about twenty-five of us. Desmond gives us a bit of 'Creature Movement' acting preliminaries and then we're off. I sway, lurch, grunt and throw in a bit of undulation. And then, just for a variation tease, a hint of robotic movement. Fifteen minutes later, it's a clap of hands and a "Thank you all very much. We'll be in touch."

How did you learn you'd got the role?

Sometime during the next few days, the phone rings. It's Desmond: "Tim, they want you for the film! Can you go along to Elstree Film Studios on Tuesday 9:00 AM next week for a costume fitting, a meet and greet, and a rehearsal?" "Erm, let me

just look in my diary." [Fake page rustling sound] "OK, yep, I can do that." I put the phone down, fall to my knees in my living room and punch the air with both arms whilst loudly declaiming "YESSSSSS!!!" in the way that footballers obviously copied from me a decade or so later.

What can you tell us about the filming of *Jedi* and your involvement of it?

Well, the whole experience of making the movie was an extraordinary one for starters. To see and experience the vast scale of it all at first hand was mind-blowing. Each set created on a sound stage was completely real with walls, ceilings and floors. We spent approximately two weeks as guests of Jabba the Hutt in his palace and another week as inmates of his sail barge. We were there to witness Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia in THAT bikini strangling the big slug with a chain. Even through the narrow openings in the nostrils of my huge 'Toothface' (as I was then called) head I could see her lithe young form clambering over Jabba's huge and slimy body and that was certainly a series of images that have stayed with me to this very day!

Us too!

George Lucas did appear sometimes on the Jabba's palace set and spent a fair amount of time looking somewhat anxious and stroking his beard whilst in conversation with the director Richard Marquand. I asked a slightly detached Harrison Ford for his autograph for my girlfriend in a break between set ups and somehow managed to lose it on the journey between the set and the dressing room. Mark Hamill was a cool guy to spend some time with. He asked Sean (Yak Face) Crawford and me if we knew of any London clubs that he might like to visit and as we were immersed in the whole New Romantic/Blitz Kids scene at that time we directed him to some of our favourite early '80s nefarious places in London! Sadly, we weren't allowed to take any personal photos on the sets, which was a great shame, but we were sworn to secrecy and bound by our contracts. I got paid approximately £300 per week, which back in 1982 was a nice wad of money to have in



Yak & Whip

the bank to play with. We didn't have agents at that time so all the monies that we earned were ours, ALL OURS!

How did you get involved in the *Star Wars* convention circuit?

At the time we filmed *Jedi*, although we knew it was going to be a huge movie worldwide, it was somehow just seen as another step on our career path. Sounds weird, doesn't it? But back in 1982, there were a lot of other things going on creatively and socially that involved us, so we put it out of our minds and got on with it all. Flash forward 20 years to 2002, Sean rings me up and says he's been emailed by this guy who is offering to pay us money to sign some pictures of our characters in *ROTJ*. This was a nice little earner, especially as he turned up in this big pub in Notting Hill with a rucksack full of posters, 10x8 colour pics and a couple of large format books about the making of the original *Star Wars* trilogy. We had absolutely no idea that we had, over the two decades, become actual characters with names and a back story. We signed and we made some cash and then we were told about the wonderful world of autograph conventions. Since my first attendance at one called *Jedi Con* in April 2003 in Basildon, Essex, I have been fortunate to have been paid to travel the world, sign autographs, meet fans, be amused and entertained and generally have a very good time indeed! None of which I could have foreseen way back in 1982. So, to sum it up, being a character actor and a member of the cast in *Star Wars Episode VI* was without doubt one of

the best things that has happened in my career and one that continues to reward me. Thank you, George Lucas!

Let's move on to *Xtro*. A cult favourite here at STARBURST HQ. What was it like working on that film? Was it a good experience?

Ah, *Xtro*. Let me count the ways! One night, after completing our Robot act at a posh cocktail restaurant named Coconut Grove just behind Oxford Street in London, Tik and Tok were approached by a couple of dudes who told us over a drinkie or two that they were putting together a low budget British sci-fi/horror movie and they wanted us to be in it. Wow, that doesn't happen every day! Naturally, we said yes after they told us that I would play an action man who comes to murderous life and Sean (Tok) would be a ghastly and hungry alien. The money was crap and the script changed every day virtually due to the somewhat 'altered' state of those in the script and directorial departments. Originally, the film was called *The Reaper* and then inexplicably overnight it became *Xtro*. I suggested that visually it might look more weird and frightening if the alien, instead of being a mime artist creeping about upright in a monster suit, was actually on all fours in a backwards crab position. Oh, they loved the idea! Then, to my horror it was decreed that I would play the alien and Sean would be the bayonet wielding life-size plastic soldier! Damn!

So how did you approach playing the alien?

I went to the workshops of a company in South London called NEXF (I think) to have my whole body cast in plaster in a backwards crab position on a plastic sheet



Tik & Tok



"I then, against every instinct of my goose-pimpled body, submerge myself under the scummy surface and allow the contents of the pool to flood in through the eye and mouth sockets in the mask [...] It's a revoltingly claustrophobic and genuinely frightening experience"

Oh dear. Anyway, the film went on to become notorious as a Video Nasty back in the 1980s...

The scene that primarily caused this now somewhat charmingly oddball Brit movie to be considered a possible contender for 'Video Nastiness' back in the day was the moment that the girl that I'd orally impregnated with my extraterrestrial jizz in her country cottage (but because of the backwards head thing I couldn't savour the moment) begins to give birth. But what emerges from between her now motionless thighs is the naked torso of a fully grown man! Yep, complete with masses of lumpy blood, afterbirth and a gristly umbilical cord that he chews through when he's Homo erectus.

Back then this moment alone caused people to run from theatres aghast with their hands over their mouths. If you couple that with a naked Maryam d'Abo hung up in a bathroom like a birthing cocoon plopping out alien eggs into the tub, an unstoppable Action Man come to life who bayonets an old lady to death, a ghastly midget clown, a blood-drenched young boy with newly developed psycho-kinetic powers, a corridor-strolling, completely superfluous black panther and much more other weirdness, you've got a movie that was so *out there* then but today it just fits right *in there*. These days, I really enjoy it on the rare occasions that I watch it, but back in 1983? Different story altogether!

You can find out more about Tim at timdry.co.uk and starwarscontinuum.com

on the floor. I was allowed to keep my underwear on, but despite copious amounts of Vaseline being applied there were many stray pubes and body hairs embedded in the rock hard plaster. Ladies, I KNOW what it feels like to have a Brazilian! My head was also cast in two halves so that the crew could mould the alien skull to fit my own. It was a ghastly, claustrophobic event that even now I shudder to recall.

Yikes!

Most of my scenes were filmed outside in a wood in Buckinghamshire, England in March late at night. I tell you, if you're encased in a tight rubber suit you get cold, very cold. I did. No real provision was made for me in terms of comfort or safety and I became increasingly angry at the indifference of the director and his cronies. Because the head had to go on backwards, I could only see where I'd been not where I was going, which was a challenge, believe me, when you're crawling on all fours along the mucky and leafy floor of a damp wood!

The director, no doubt after some heavy inhalation of exotic herbs the night before, comes out with a bright idea a few

days later. This involves me as the alien emerging headfirst in slo-mo from a pool of brackish water. They've created said puddle somewhere in a clearing deep in the heartless and chilly forest, lit it and now the crew await my shivering arrival. I ease my body into the tepid water and have my Xtro head applied. I then, against every instinct of my goose-pimpled body, submerge myself under the scummy surface and allow the contents of the pool to flood in through the eye and mouth sockets in the mask. I can just about make out the director's distant and muffled shout of "ACTION!" and I slowly - slowly - raise my head up from the swampy water. It's a revoltingly claustrophobic and genuinely frightening experience, as I could actually very easily drown doing this, and I realise that no one has had the foresight to prepare for this possibility. I do the action once again for luck and that's it. There will be no more! Even if the world's largest hair is jammed in 'The Gate'! You are not paying me enough to undergo this. Fuck you very much and goodnight! I'm home by 6 A.M. and I vow never, ever to do that kind of dangerous, underpaid wank again.



ROYAL
OBSERVATORY
GREENWICH

we are

ALIENS!

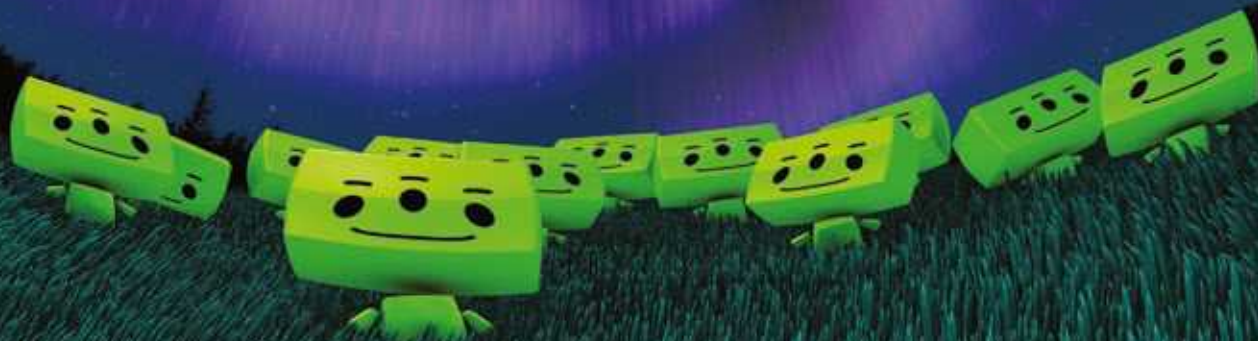
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OUTSIDE THE BOX



Lived, however, dropped back to 4.34 million overnight with a 7-day figure of 6.11. The much-anticipated *The Zygon Invasion* saw a further and more dramatic fall back to 3.87 million viewers, the series now pitched back against its old rival **The X Factor**, Simon Cowell's ageing talent circus, which itself pulled in less than 6 million viewers for the first time in its history.

Of course, what these numbers suggest in real terms is that whilst **Doctor Who** has hit a significant bump in the road (its UK Appreciation Index - AI - figures are also slightly down, with *The Woman Who Lived* scoring 81), it's not a complete write-off just yet (although in all likelihood, it will be spending some time in the pit stop for running repairs). This column has noted in previous ratings round-ups how the show's audience has remained remarkably stable since the series returned in 2005, posting gentle gradual year-on-year declines post-2010 whilst the ratings for many long-running shows airing in 2005 (including the UK's soap opera triumvirate and other long-running dramas such as **New Tricks**, **Doc Martin**, and **Casualty**) have seen more marked downturns in their fortunes. What we are seeing now is **Doctor Who** losing its audience much more suddenly and, to an extent, stepping in line with the general UK TV audience decline evidenced in the last four or five years. It could even be argued that the series is now at the point it could reasonably have been expected to be if it had been performing in accordance with the typical TV audience of a long-running drama or serial. At the moment, **Doctor Who** is performing broadly in line with most of the year's many mid-range TV drama hits and still considerably better than several of the new drama series that have debuted in what might be loosely called the autumn TV season, such as **River, From Darkness** and **Jekyll and Hyde**, ITV's new 'rival' to **Doctor Who** which could only muster 3.38 million viewers for its first episode.

The problem, of course, is that **Doctor Who** is one of the BBC's so-called super-brands (**Strictly Come Dancing** and **Top Gear** being the others) and the Corporation are bound to be concerned that their big-hitting family drama – and cash cow – has started to wander back into the cult TV territory that saw its 'classic' series incarnation bite the dust back in 1989. At this stage, no-one is realistically or seriously suggesting that the show is likely to be cancelled –

Series Nine Ratings Slide Continues

Doctor Who continues to post dramatically declining viewing figures in the UK as Series Nine progresses – despite the best efforts of hardcore fans who insist that the final consolidated figures are 'as good as ever' and that the preponderance of catch-up viewing facilities has fragmented the audience and made assessing accurate figures virtually impossible. The former assertion is laughable, of course – it's generally accepted now that **Doctor Who** has begun to haemorrhage its UK audience – but there is some truth in the second (bearing in mind that pets and viewers on Venus remain a frustratingly difficult section of the audience to catalogue).

Rewinding to the series premiere *The Magician's Apprentice*, the final available figure for the episode (including not just the traditional seven-day catch-up, but now a twenty-eight day figure) sits at just 6.74 million viewers. This is easily the lowest figure for a 'first night' of any series since the return in 2005 and an astonishing 2.63 million down on *Deep Breath*, Peter Capaldi's debut episode twelve months earlier. It is also 1.74 million down on the figure for the previously-transmitted episode, the 2014 Christmas special *Last Christmas* and 1.16 million fewer than *Death in Heaven*, the controversial final episode of Series Eight, transmitted last September.

Episode Two, *The Witch's Familiar*, plunged to an overnight audience of 3.7 million (albeit, as noted last month, playing against an England v. Wales Rugby World Cup event on ITV in the UK) with a final consolidated '28 Days Later' figure of 6.15 million. Final figures for subsequent episodes are not yet available as we go to press although there has been a slight upswing in the numbers as the competition has become less formidable. Toby Whithouse's *Under the Lake* scored another overnight of 3.7 before logging a 7-day final of 5.68 million. A conservative estimate – based on the 28-day additional figure of the series debut – may add a further 200,000 to 400,000 suggesting the episode will deliver a final rating of around 6 million. *Before the Flood*, however, recorded an encouraging upswing to 4.4 million overnight with a seven-day figure of 6.05 million (which, incidentally, includes the lowest seven-day timeshift for an episode since 2013's *Journey to the Centre of the TARDIS*) – and a similar caveat regarding any uplift from the '28-day' numbers.

Viking romp *The Girl Who Died* guest starring **Game of Thrones** actress Maisie Williams continued the previous episode's improvement with a 4.63 overnight figure, consolidating after 7 days to 6.56 million. Sequel episode *The Woman Who*

certainly not in an age when hit TV shows are rarer than genuinely funny gags in a Steven Moffat script – but the BBC are likely to move fast to address the clear evidence that **Doctor Who** is falling out of favour with its domestic audience. Ratings are also declining in the show's most notable international markets; available figures for Series Nine on BBC America, often trumpeted by defensive, blinkered fans as serious *proof* that the show remains unfalteringly popular worldwide, have dropped from over 2 million for *The Magician's Apprentice* to just over 1 million for *Before the Flood* and figures are also showing a drop-off in Australia. More on **Doctor Who's** Series Nine ratings next month.

Christmas Special News

Something to look forward to/dread with all your heart (*delete as applicable) as the festive period draws ever nearer. Current showrunner Steven Moffat has been speaking of this year's still-untitled Christmas episode (traditionally airing on Christmas Day itself, although no timeslot is yet confirmed for this year's effort). The episode features the return of Alex Kingston as Professor River "*Hello Sweetie! Spoilers!*" Song. Moffat recently said that the Christmas episode has "*been a riot to do... that's been sort of a big fun chase episode, really. Just Mr and Mrs Who battling their way past nonsense and that's been great fun. Alex [Kingston] is always great value*". Start gnawing your knuckles and counting those sleeps now, Whovians! The episode also features appearances from **Little Britain/Pompidou** star Matt Lucas and **The Inbetweeners/Man Down** comedy 'giant' Greg Davies, with more guest casting likely to be announced shortly.

BBC Books Release More Classic Novels

BBC Books will release a new repackaged batch of Target adaptations of **Doctor Who** serials from the classic series next year. New titles will include Bill Strutton's *Doctor Who and the Zarbi*, one of the three original novels first published by Frederick Muller back in 1965 and based on the William Hartnell serial *The Web Planet*, and subsequent Doctors will be represented by Troughton's *The Web of Fear*, Pertwee's *The Dinosaur Invasion*, Tom Baker's classic *Genesis of the Daleks*, Davison's *The Visitation*, Colin Baker's *Vengeance on Varos*, and Sylvester McCoy's *Battlefield*, the first serial from the original series' final run in 1989. The books are currently slated to begin a staggered release from next April.

In other news, December 10th sees the release from BBC Books of *Legends of Ashildr*, a compilation of short stories by Justin Richards, James Goss, David Llewellyn and Jenny Colgan chronicling the off-screen adventures of the immortal Viking created by the Doctor in the recent TV episode *The Girl Who Died* and played by Maisie Williams.



Obituaries

Fans of **Doctor Who** in the early 1970s were familiar with the on-screen credit 'Action by Havoc' at the end of many episodes of Third Doctor Jon Pertwee's early serials. 'Havoc' was a collective of stuntmen and performers led by the legendary Derek Ware, who passed away from cancer on September 22nd. 'Havoc' – whose number also included familiar names such as Stuart Fell, Alan Chuntz and Roy Scammell – was created by Ware in 1966 and went on to provide thrilling action sequences for the new colour era of **Doctor Who**. Ware himself had been appearing regularly in **Doctor Who** since 1965 and perhaps his most notable work in the series included appearing as a stunt double for Roger Delgado's The Master in a swordfight sequence in 1972's *The Sea Devils*. 'Havoc' was disbanded later in the 1970s when fellow stuntmen complained that the group had begun monopolising the TV stunt industry. Ware continued to work extensively on film and TV productions all over the UK from TV series such as **The Bill**, **The Last of the Summer Wine**, and **EastEnders** to feature films including **Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves** and **The Italian Job**. He is survived by his wife Maureen.

Actor Neville Jason, who played Prince Reynart (in both his humanoid and android form) in the 1978 Tom Baker serial (and **Prisoner of Zenda** pastiche) *Androids of Tara* passed away in October at the age of 81. RADA-trained Jason enjoyed a long career in film and TV, his credits including appearances in the James Bond movie **From Russia with Love** and Ridley Scott's **The Duellists** and TV productions such as **The Tripods**, **Emergency Ward 10**, and **Maigret**. In later life the actor, who is survived by his wife Gillian, became involved in the burgeoning audiobook market and one of his credits includes an unabridged recording of Tolstoy's **War and Peace**.

The Doctor/Donna Return!

As widely reported in the last few weeks, rumours of the return to the world of **Doctor Who** of two hugely popular figures from the show's recent past were finally confirmed when Big Finish Productions, purveyors of audio adventures featuring surviving cast members from the original run of the series – and increasingly, characters from more recent series – have secured the talents of both David Tennant and Catherine Tate for a new run of audio adventures in which they will reprise their roles as the phenomenally popular Tenth Doctor and his 'mate' Donna Noble. *The Tenth Doctor Adventures* will be released in May 2016 and consists of three new adventures – *Technophobia* by Matt Fitton, *Time Reaver* by Jenny T. Colgan and *Death and the Queen* by James Goss. David Tennant appeared as the Doctor on TV from 2005 – 2010 (returning in 2013's fiftieth anniversary episode), taking the show to new heights of popularity. He was joined full-time by Catherine's 'supertemp' Donna for his last full series in 2008, following a guest slot in the 2006 Christmas special *The Runaway Bride*. *Outside the Box* is unfeasibly excited at the prospect of the return of the Doctor/Donna partnership.

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT THE WHONIVERSE
BY JR SOUTHALL



The Radio Times for the week commencing October 17th has Doctor Who splashed across its cover. I'm not sure Maisie Williams is a big enough star to justify such a thing (she's certainly not the actress that springs to my mind when I think of *Game of Thrones*), but presumably the Radio Times covers are decided weeks in advance and her appearance on it – tagged as a potential new companion for the Doctor – was always on the cards. It does feel like the mid-series 'tent-peg' relaunch has been brought forwards, though (the Zygon two-parter seemingly the more obvious candidate), on account of the hit *Doctor Who*'s viewing figures have taken thanks to the rugby.

But maybe those viewing figures were always going to take a hit this year?

The rugby has definitely had an effect. I'm not sure that anybody realised quite how popular a World Cup taking place on home soil was going to be, and while the matches haven't been watched by anything like as many people who would

have tuned in for equivalent games of football, they have nevertheless picked up many more viewers than expected. That two of the first three episodes of Series Nine were scheduled against matches in which England themselves were playing (the first against Wales, the second to try and save their place in the tournament) meant that *Doctor Who* was always going to have lower overnights, but the hope, as always, was that the consolidated figures would show an improvement significant enough to bring things back into line with previous years.

Series Eight, with the exception of *Deep Breath* (which as the début of a new Doctor was always going to be atypical), generally saw overnights of around 5m viewers, with consolidated figures of roughly 7m or so (taking iPlayer into account would add a further million, in line with previous series). But after four episodes this year, that trend is significantly down, by perhaps around a million viewers – and although with the rugby over, it is rising again, it is likely that the rugby has had more than a temporary effect.

Because viewers like to watch something from start to finish, and if they've missed the beginning – for whatever reason – they're less likely to re-join partway through the run. This is still true for *Doctor Who*, in spite of its semi-anthological nature, and in spite of the existence of catch-up services. A huge portion of *Doctor Who*'s regular audience are casual enough that they tend to watch the programme on broadcast only, and as this year is beginning to demonstrate, having missed it, they'd be unlikely to seek it out and catch up. So the hit the series has taken on account of the rugby will probably have a more lasting effect (which the accumulation of episodes will probably offset, as more and more people do return) than anyone could have anticipated.

And then again, perhaps the rugby was simply an excuse for a certain fraction of the audience to leave, maybe having watched much of last year's run out of habit, when really they'd already tuned out?

The average person's enjoyment of

Doctor Who (whether they be six, sixty or anywhere in between) isn't dictated by who's writing it, but by who's playing it. And while the kids doubtless love Peter Capaldi's portrayal – he's their Victor Meldrew – and parents and other adults can no doubt appreciate his performances, he's not the easiest of Doctors to engage with and he's certainly no David Tennant. Capaldi might be a favourite among the series' more hardcore fandom, but we should never forget that the hardcore only makes up the smallest fraction of the audience, and the series' direction should never be dictated by their preferences.

But casting Capaldi as the Doctor, even if it was a move partly designed to appeal to those hardcore fans, is possibly also a move designed to allow for the programme's increased longevity. The BBC can happily take a slight hit on domestic viewing figures (even as those figures increase in other territories), as long as the downward trend isn't significant and ongoing; but having an older and less affable Doctor as a temporary measure allows for the broadening of its parameters in the longer term, the result of which ought to be to ensure that in a more general way, the series can maintain its success regardless of who is cast to play the part. There's a subliminal effect in the general viewership's mind, which is to cement the idea that the Doctor can be anybody and that the series can be just as much fun when he's not being played by someone young and 'attractive' – and the result of this is to allow the series to branch out in whatever direction it pleases (within reason, and not necessarily only in the shape of its leading man) without becoming, in the wider viewership's mind, something that doesn't feel like their image of what *Doctor Who* should be.

The other side of this is that in spite of a slight, and hopefully temporary, slide in domestic viewing figures, *Doctor Who* is now more popular abroad than ever before, with *The Magician's Apprentice* breaking records in America. There's a reason why the series is trending in opposite directions in these two markets,



and it has nothing to do with the rugby. Because in the UK, *Doctor Who* is mass-appeal primetime programming, in competition with the likes of *The X Factor* and the soaps, and basically as much a part of the national television consciousness as *Downton Abbey* and *Doc Martin*. It is watched, on a regular basis, by considerably more than a tenth of the population – and those who don't watch it know exactly what it is. Whereas in places like the United States, *Doctor Who* is cult programming (2 million viewers might be an impressive number – edging towards *Battlestar Galactica* territory – but it's only a tiny fraction of the population) and as such is watched differently. In the UK, we expect it to appeal to a certain part of our brain – that part which likes to relax and allow the comedy and fantasy to transport us away from our more mundane preoccupations – while in the US, *Doctor Who* is expected to fulfil different criteria, engaging similar mental territories as programmes like *Lost* and *Heroes* once did.

The current version of *Doctor Who* manages to combine the two approaches mostly successfully – hence its prosperity both at home and abroad, but it is never

going to appeal to everybody all of the time, and if the Capaldi tenure is a slight disappointment domestically, then the chances are that won't last long.

And if Series Nine's viewing figures are a blip – partly as a result of the rugby, and partly as a result of it being more than a decade old and currently with a leading man whose appeal is perhaps a little more esoteric – then it's possible the BBC might already have ameliorated against this, and completely by accident. Because it looks like 2016 is going to be a gap year, and if there's one thing taking a break can achieve, it's the relaunch of the series afterwards – whether that be with the same showrunner and leading man or not. Those who have maybe unintentionally allowed the programme to lapse from their regular viewing habits love a jumping-back-on point, and a postponed tenth series might be just what they need. The 2009 year of specials felt somewhat underwhelming, but they did enable Matt Smith to make his debut freed from the ongoing nature of the Tennant series; in effect creating a fresh start in a way that a simple change of lead actor during the normal course of events might not. And Smith's viewing figures bear out the notion that this new beginning brought with it a brand new audience, because the consolidated averages and iPlayer requests for the Eleventh Doctor actually improved on the Tenth's performance, with the exception of the inflated figures of the Series Four finale. For every David Tennant fan who quit the series when he did, somebody else started watching with *The Eleventh Hour* and has stuck with *Doctor Who* since.

The current dip in the series' domestic audience shouldn't be seen as worrying, then, and the BBC obviously wouldn't consider cancelling *Doctor Who* while its foreign sales are so lucrative. It's just an indication of the programme evolving and its audience evolving alongside it, and there's every chance that the next stage of its evolution will prove to be just as popular as the present one has been, and perhaps even more so.



ARTWORK BY SIMON BRETT



REVIEWS

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



DOCTOR WHO: THE UNDERWATER MENACE

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: JULIA SMITH / SCREENPLAY: GEOFFREY ORME / STARRING: PATRICK TROUGHTON, ANNEKE WILLS, MICHAEL CRAZE, FRAZER HINES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

So here it is. Barring any unexpected missing episode recoveries, *The Underwater Menace*, the third serial from the era of second Doctor Patrick Troughton, is likely to be the last BBC DVD release from the 'classic series' range. On-again/off-again more often than a wedding in a soap opera, the DVD finally limps out following a BBC turnaround (it was officially finally cancelled as recently as June) in the face of considerable fan pressure to get these last episodes (especially episode two, recovered a couple of years ago and now finally surfacing restored and scrubbed up) released. Fans will, of course, be pleased to finally plug that gap in their collections (well, apart from all those other currently unpluggable gaps) even though only half the story actually exists and, as 1960s Doctor Who goes, *The Underwater Menace* really isn't much cop.

The recovered second episode, however, does serve to rehabilitate the serial's cheesy reputation, thanks to a sterling performance from Patrick Troughton, rising way above often lamentable material and indulging in lots of quirky visual business previously available audio recordings obviously haven't been able to depict. The story sees the recently regenerated Doctor and his chums – Polly, Ben and the newly-recruited Jamie (standing room only in the TARDIS at this point in Doctor Who

history) arrive on an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The island is actually a gateway to the long-lost fabled city of Atlantis which is alive and well under the sea and home to a bunch of religious fanatics in silly hats, unfeasible fish people and the mad, bad Professor Zaroff (Joseph Furst) who has promised to raise Atlantis from the sea bed but secretly plots to drain the Earth's oceans into its molten core, splitting the planet apart. Why? Well, why not? It's a cast-iron plan; as Zaroff famously rages at the end of Episode Three, "Nothing in ze world can stop me now!" This is the stuff of Doctor Who legend.

The missing first and last episodes of the serial are represented by images taken from the TV at the time of the story's transmission by enterprising historian John Cura; whilst they're obviously not of the standard of previous reconstructions or animations of missing episodes (the BBC wanted to get this disc out as quickly and cheaply as possible) they just about do the job and help fill in the visual gaps in the narrative. Some images stay on screen an age as the action rattles on in the episode, but the selection of stills is decent and comprehensive enough and whilst watching reconstructions is a necessary evil, they do at least help tell the story and are fluid enough to rub alongside the surviving two episodes.

It's tacky, cheap and unsubtle, but *The Underwater Menace* at least gives us a little bit more of Patrick Troughton's very peculiar Doctor Who magic. If the story itself isn't especially distinguished – and it really isn't – Troughton, as ever, is a joy to behold and he's well supported here by 'to hell with it' performances by his fellow regulars and a gung-ho supporting cast which includes Colin Jeavons and Catherine Howe. Decent special features include a mix of commentary/interview options, a standard thirty-minute 'Fishy Tale' 'making of' largely led by Anneke Wills' memories of the serial as well as new framing material shot on the story's original location. There's also part two of the 2013 TV Centre feature, which sees 1980s Who team Peter Davison, Janet Fielding and Mark Strickson, guided by Yvette Fielding, continue their memory lane tour of BBC TV centre, at the time slowly winding down, now shamefully being demolished. It's nothing to do with *The Underwater Menace*, but Davison and co., as ever, are full of cheery anecdotes, aided by behind-the-scenes crew such as senior cameraman Alec Wheal, AFM Sue Hedden and writer/producer Richard Marson. Not exactly a stand-out release to finally sign off on the 'classic' series on DVD, but one which is sure to find favour with those who have been clamouring for its release for so long.

Extras: Commentaries / Interviews / A Fishy Tale / The Television Centre of the Universe Part 2 / Censor clips

PAUL MOUNT

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LIVVY BOOTE is...

THE GIRL FROM X PLANET X



Batman. Really, who wants him as a role model? He's moody and punches people...

We all know that Black Widow is awesome and that Captain Marvel is a wonderful role model. We also know that it's unbelievably *boring* to watch one sausage fest after another, every single male superhero being played by the same average white guy. It's frustrating to feel that directors and producers think throwing in one solitary female character into a movie dominated by men is enough, exempting them from sexism - because changing TV and movies up a bit by actually involving some sort of diversity is just *too much*. Comic books are doing it - Thor is now a woman, because why not? Batwoman is a lesbian. Ms Marvel is a Muslim girl. It's fair to say that comic books are at the forefront of diversity in entertainment right now. But we're not seeing the same in their adaptations.

You find plenty of butt-hurt comic book fans who feel like their 'childhood's been ruined' by gender bending a character or 'overrunning comics with feminist propaganda'. But actually, you'd be surprised by how nice people actually are. People are generally chilled out about female superheroes; Internet trolls and Reddit comments aren't representative of real people's opinions. In fact, most of the stuff you'll see is joy and excitement about actually seeing some change in the comic book genre. It's not just women who get bored by seeing the same kind of superhero over and over again, after all.

And yet, despite the progression of

diversity within comic books, and many of the suggestions of the public that we should have a Black Widow movie, we're still being denied as many women-led movies. Outside of the comic book world, this is an issue - but the Marvel and DC Universes show that anyone can be as super as they like; rich, poor, female, male, big or small. But we don't get that sort of freedom on the screen. And it's really, really sad - and discouraging for all the kids out there who want to be heroes, but don't think they can.

Cinema is the biggest culprit for letting down the comic book universe and its fans; why wasn't Hawkeye deaf in the Avengers movies, like he was meant to be? If we could have a blind Matt Murdoch in the TV series *Daredevil*, what's wrong with a deaf Clint Barton? What does this kind of dismissive attitude do to the disabled kids who read Hawkeye and aspire to be like him? What does it do to the girls who relate to female superheroes, to find only one of them on the *Avengers* team? Obviously, it makes them feel like they can't be superheroes, like they can't do all the things that the boys can do. In the real world, women are only just being accepted into the worlds of medicine, law, CEOs - if you're a woman of colour, disabled, or anything but straight, then it gets even harder. We live in a world where minorities are treated with minimum respect. But in the fictional world, in the world of superheroes, minorities can be seen equally

- except, we aren't when it comes to the cinema, because casting agents aren't transferring that onto the screen.

To a Muslim child in this society, it is so important to have a Ms Marvel movie. To show those boys and girls that they can be heroes, not demonised in the way they are in our culture. Little girls *need* to see Captain Marvel kick ass on screen - because not everyone can afford to buy multiple issues of comics. You need to see it to believe it. What about the little kids who can't afford to read Wonder Woman comics? She's a symbol of justice, and yet those who don't have the money can't buy her comics and won't be able to read her fight for equality and peace! Watching a movie, however, is cheaper and easier. It's the most accessible form of entertainment, so it really ought to be more diverse.

There's another major problem in having so few minority superheroes. Yes, *everyone* needs to be able to feel like they can be strong and have a say in this world. Little girls need to see the message that they have - or *should* have - as much of a chance as everybody else. But the terrible thing about the patriarchy, within the real world and the fictional world, is that it makes little boys think that *they always* have to be strong. That men must always be the lead roles, have the authority, and be powerful. That men must



Kamala Khan, aka Ms Marvel is amazing. We need inspiring women like this on screens.

HAVING TOO FEW FEMALE SUPERHEROES ON OUR SCREENS HAS A BIGGER EFFECT THAN YOU MIGHT THINK...

always be heroic and do amazing things. That they should be so tough, they can't even ever cry; because that's feminine. And if it's feminine, it's weak.

I found a YouTube video the other day that questioned why there were higher suicide rates among men than women. People asked, "*If men are so powerful, and women have so little authority, how come it's not the other way round?*" It's obvious. It's a society that puts so much pressure, so much assumption upon boys being the leaders, being strong, that it breaks them. A society that looks down on half of the population for being emotional, 'weak'? It's toxic. It endangers women, and men.

So, yes. Having so many male and so few female superheroes makes a difference.

Because why should boys have to be in charge all the time? Why should they be tough all the time? Of course they shouldn't. And mostly, our society knows that, but there's still this expectation. And it's *terrible*.

The truth is, people *want* to see male superheroes, because it's what they expect.

Or, at least, it's what people think they want, because it's the way it's always been. So, we hardly ever see female-led movies, because it's not what we know of the world. And when we do get one, it has to be *three times* as good to get the support and recognition it deserves.

Actually, I've been doing a lot of research recently. My friend who is taking psychology told me about a study of women in the work place. The men did their jobs as they were asked, sometimes well, sometimes under par. They were congratulated for their work with exuberance. The women, on the other hand, had to work above and beyond the assignment, just to get recognition.

So, yes, one day we might get a Black Widow movie. And yet, we are getting a Captain Marvel movie. But you know that people will be bitching about it as soon as it is released. Of course, everyone will be overwhelmed with joy and excitement to have a little bit of variation on the screen. But the movie will have to be 10 times more exciting than *Guardians of the Galaxy*

(a movie with criminally under-developed female characters, by the way, who deserved a lot more than they got).

This article has been a lot angrier than my previous ones. And I'd apologise, except that if I'd been brought up on more things like Wonder Woman and less of freaking Batman, maybe I would've had more confidence in myself. If my male friends hadn't been brought up on movies that showed men living such miserable lives like Bruce Wayne did, without ever shedding a tear, maybe they'd be a lot happier and in touch with their feelings.

Things are looking up. Soon we'll be seeing a new generation of Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel. And now, the TV series *Supergirl* has started, which I hope will inspire the girls around the world to be super too. But there's room for improvement. It's simple - we need to give female-led movies all the love and support they need if we want to see more equality in the fictional universe. And if we do that, there'll be better equality in the real world too.

+



Very excited for Supergirl!

STARBURST

GOOD GRIEF!

by Ian White



THEY WERE ONCE A MAINSTAY OF CHILDREN'S TV AND NEWSPAPER STRIPS, BUT NOW CHARLES SCHULZ'S BELOVED PEANUTS CHARACTERS ARE RETURNING TO THE BIG SCREEN. WE DELVE DEEPER INTO THE HISTORY OF CHARLIE BROWN, SNOOPY AND CO...

Fans of kite-eating trees and followers of the Great Pumpkin rejoice – the world's favourite round-headed underdog Charlie Brown is returning to the big screen with his indomitable puppy Snoopy and the rest of the lovable *Peanuts* gang. Maybe now we'll find out the answers to some questions that have been worrying us for a very long time:

Will 'good ol' Charlie Brown' finally manage to kick the football before Lucy snatches it away from him? And will the baseball team he manages ever win a game?

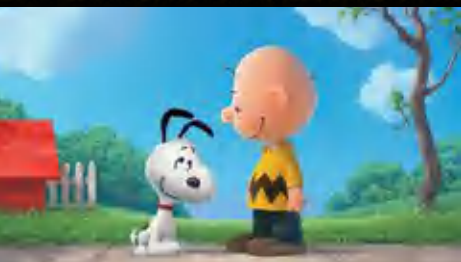
Will Snoopy, the World War I Flying Ace, finally defeat his legendary nemesis the Red Baron?

And will Charlie ever summon up the courage to talk to the little red-haired girl he's spent almost sixty-five years dreaming about (even though he still doesn't look a day over eight years old)?

Who knows if *Snoopy and Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie* will spill the dog chow about any of the above, but here at STARBURST we thought that Snoopy and friends' return to the big screen after an absence of thirty-five years gives us a great chance to celebrate the cartoon genius of artist/writer Charles M. Schulz and to muse for a moment over all things *Peanuts*.

According to Bill Watterson, creator of the comic characters Calvin and

Hobbes, Charles Schulz redefined the modern comic strip when he created *Peanuts*. Although a little boy named Charlie Brown and a dog looking very like Snoopy were featured in an earlier comic strip drawn by Schulz called *Li'l Folks* that enjoyed brief success but never made it into syndication, the *Peanuts* strip we know and love debuted on October 2nd, 1950. At the height of its popularity, *Peanuts* was translated into 21 languages and published daily in more than two and a half thousand newspapers around the world. Schulz wrote and illustrated almost 18,000 strips across *Peanuts*' fifty-year run and, as part of his will, requested that no new *Peanuts* strips should be drawn after his death. United Features, the legal owner



of the strip, have honoured Schulz's wishes to this very day. The very last *Peanuts* strip was published February 13th, 2000, the day after Schulz passed away in his sleep following complications related to colon cancer. Ever since then, newspapers have only been allowed to publish reprints.

But aside from the comics, *Peanuts* has enjoyed a pretty remarkable TV and movie career. The first animated TV special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (1965), set a pretty high bar by winning an Emmy. Since then, the *Peanuts* gang have appeared in more than forty specials, most of which have become seasonal staples. In the US, *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* (1973) is as vital to that holiday as *It's a Wonderful Life* is to Yuletide.

But that's not all. There have also been two television series, *The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show* (1983-86) and *This is America, Charlie Brown* (1988-89), and the gang even found time to appear onstage in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (1967) and the much-revived *Snoopy! The Musical* (1975). In fact, the musicals are the only time we actually get to hear Snoopy speak! In the comic strip, his comments only appeared in thought bubbles that none of the other characters could see and, in animation, Snoopy was practically a mime whose vocals were limited to the occasional 'sob' or 'BLEAH!' exclaimed so loudly it usually knocked Charlie Brown off his feet.

Actually, the 'Bleahs' and other occasional noises made by Snoopy and his birdie pal Woodstock were supplied by Bill Melendez, who - up until 2006 - also produced and directed all of the *Peanuts* animated adventures. Melendez died in 2008, but staying true to a happy tradition, his voice still appears in the new film thanks to the wonder of archival recordings.

On the subject of films, *Snoopy and Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie* will be the fourth feature-length outing for Snoopy and co. - although for the first time they will appear in 3D. Don't get nervous, though, the new production is in good hands. The screenplay was written by Schulz's son Craig, grandson Bryan, and Cornelius Uliano, who are also producing alongside Blue Sky Films, the creators of the hit franchise *Ice Age*. Together they have obviously gone to incredible lengths to preserve the integrity of Schulz's original creations - just look at the trailer and you'll see the expressions of Charlie Brown and his pals are note-perfect, and the heart and humour of the *Peanuts* comic strip is obviously on its way to us completely intact.

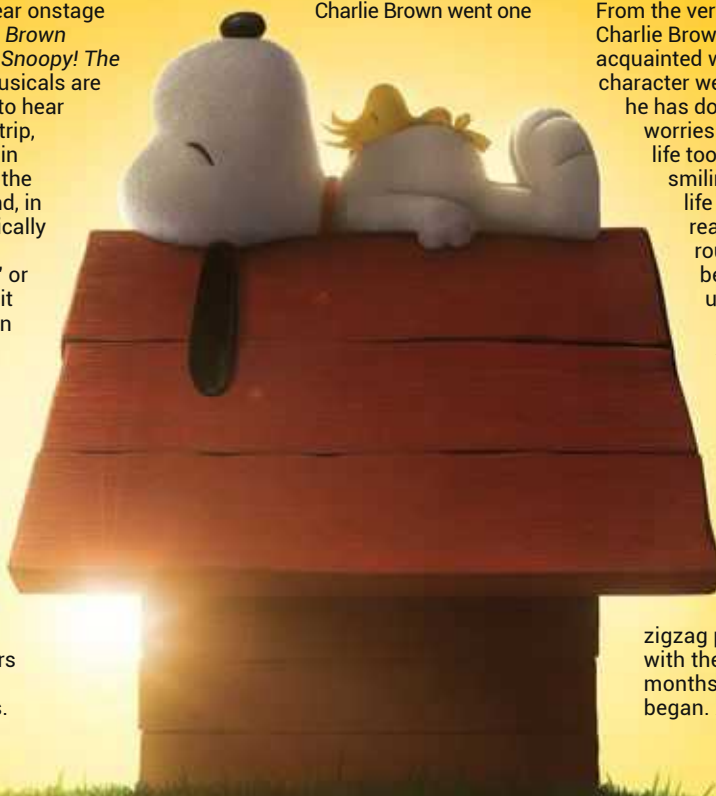
Okay, so Snoopy isn't usual STARBURST fare - as far as we can remember he's never battled sea monsters or saved the planet from aliens (although we've no doubt he could) - but Snoopy and Charlie Brown went one

better than most of our sci-fi heroes when, in 1968, NASA recruited Snoopy as a 'flight safety watchdog' for their Apollo space program. In May 1969, a television audience of one billion people watched as Apollo 10's Charlie Brown command module and the Snoopy lunar module travelled to the moon. Charlie Brown completed 31 lunar orbits before returning to Earth and now calls the Science Museum in London its home, but the Snoopy lunar module is still in solar orbit and is the only surviving lunar module sent into space. An engraved pin called The Silver Snoopy Award remains a special and highly coveted NASA commendation, given by an astronaut to individuals within the industry who have made an outstanding contribution to the space program.

So, to whet our appetite for the main attraction, here are a few more facts to get us in a *Peanuts* Movie mood:

From the very beginning, Schulz intended Charlie Brown to be an everyman 'more acquainted with losing than winning', a character we can identify with because he has doubts and insecurities. He worries too much and thinks about life too deeply, but generally keeps smiling no matter what challenges life throws at him. For all those reasons and more, the little round-headed kid has also been described as the ultimate survivor.

And as for that round head... if you thought Charlie was bald, think again. Schulz described him as having such fair hair, cut so short that it was difficult to see. Blame Charlie's dad for that - he's the barber (Schulz's father was a barber too). He's also been wearing that T-shirt with the black zigzag pretty much his whole life, with the exception of a couple of months when the cartoon strip began. As in posters for the new



movie, Charlie's T-shirt is almost always yellow although there have been one or two occasions in the past when he's worn a red T-shirt instead. Maybe he ditched the red shirt after watching a few *Star Trek* episodes.

Snoopy was inspired by Spike, one of Schulz's childhood pets. He was originally going to be named Sniffy, but luckily Schulz changed his mind. More worrying than that, an early comic strip and the movie *Snoopy, Come Home* (1972) suggest that Charlie Brown almost didn't become Snoopy's owner. At an early age, Snoopy was taken in by a little girl named Lila, but she was unable to keep him.

Snoopy is a Walter Mitty-like character and has a pretty full fantasy life. When he's not dogfighting the Red Baron (take a look at the trailer: the Eiffel Tower hasn't seen this much action since Bond fought with May Day in *A View To a Kill*), he's a world famous author, a chick-magnet college jock called Joe Cool, and a root beer aficionado who reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace* at 'a word a day'.

He's also the star of a very well-known Christmas song by The Royal Guardsmen, *Snoopy vs. The Red Baron* (1966), which made it to No.8 in the UK singles chart. The Royal Guardsmen are still around and still singing about Snoopy, but the less said about their most recent Snoopy outing, *Snoopy vs. Osama* (2006), the better.

On the subject of music, Vince Guaraldi's score for the original animated series (who can resist the cool jazz piano of the tune *Linus and Lucy* from *A Charlie Brown Christmas*? Believe us, you'll recognise it when you hear it!) has been preserved in part for the new movie, with the rest of the score being supplied by Christophe Beck and a host of pop acts including a pretty

catchy number by Meghan Trainor called *Better When I'm Dancin'*.

But we digress. Let's talk briefly about Woodstock, the little yellow bird who is Snoopy's faithful secretary and sidekick. Although he had been in the cartoon strip for several years, Woodstock only received his name in 1970 after Schulz was inspired by the logo from the Woodstock rock festival of a bird perched on a guitar. At first, Schulz intended Woodstock to be female but later decided to make him a boy. Despite Snoopy's best efforts to find out what species of bird Woodstock might be (using an ornithologist's guide... take your minds out of the gutter), we never found out. Schulz eventually decided that just knowing Woodstock is Snoopy's best buddy is all that is important.

As for the other human characters – we can bet that Lucy Van Pelt is still going to be as crabby as ever and that she's still dispensing psychiatric advice from her little wooden booth at five cents a pop. We're certain that her comfort blanket-loving brother Linus will still be waiting for the Great Pumpkin and have a kind word for everyone. The chances are also good that Sally Brown, Charlie's little sister, will still be calling him her 'big baboo' and not understanding why he doesn't love her back.

We'll also take bets that Schroeder will still be hunched over his toy piano, performing another awesome Beethoven recital while Lucy makes goo-goo eyes at him, and that loveable nerd Marcie will still be following Peppermint Patty around and calling her 'Sir'. And who knows? Maybe their teacher Miss Othmar will make an off-screen appearance, lecturing the kids in a voice which has only ever been a 'wah-wahing' trombone noise.

But the character we're really hoping to see (but we're not holding our breath) is the next door neighbour's cat (named 'World War II' according to the cartoon strip), who spent fifty years responding to Snoopy's taunts by tearing his kennel apart in one single vicious swipe.

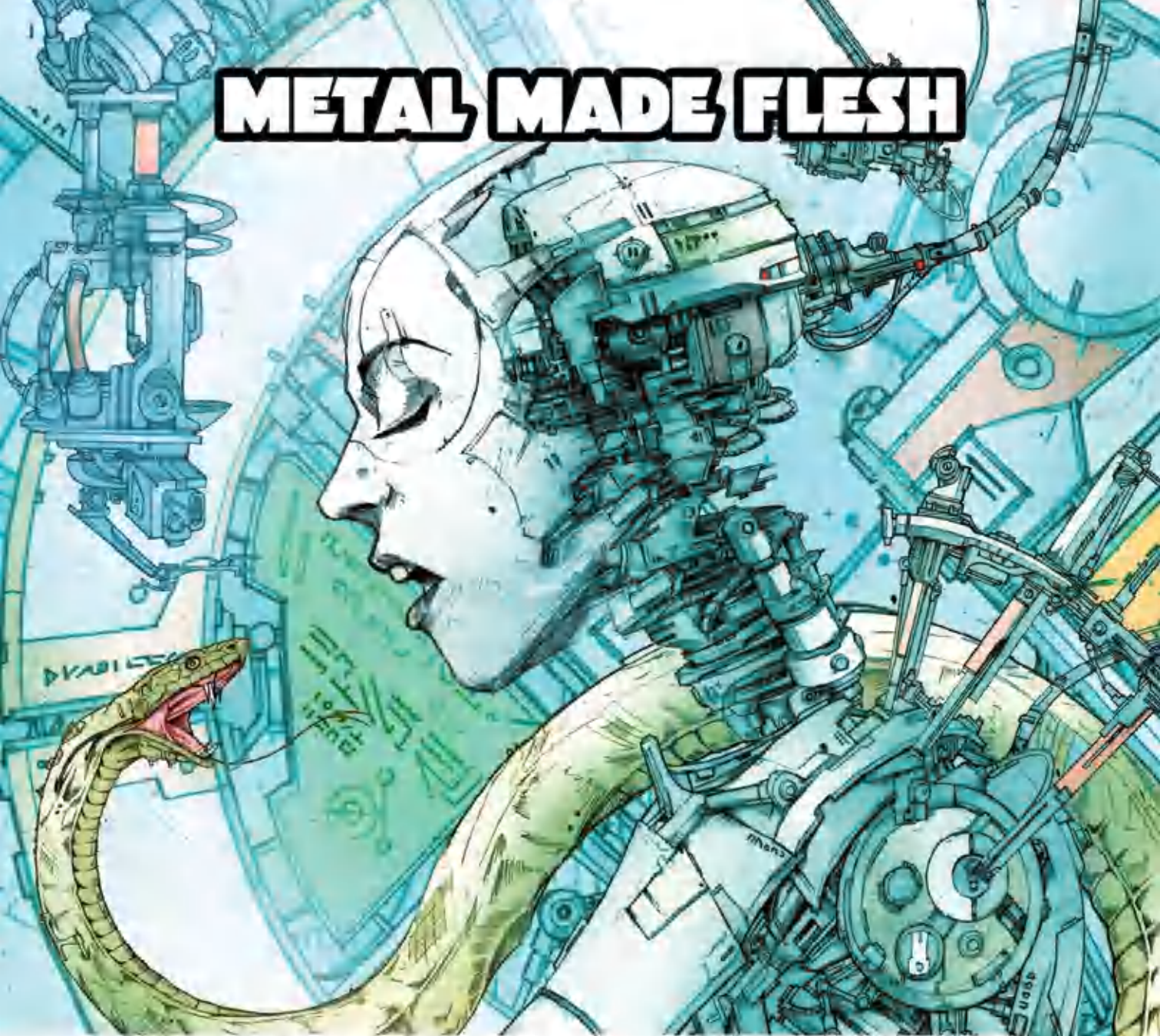
Whatever *Snoopy and Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie* will bring, one thing's for certain: it's the best early Christmas gift we could have hoped for and you'll be crazy to miss it. In fact, if you do, you might end up in the dog house.



SNOOPY AND CHARLIE BROWN:
THE PEANUTS MOVIE will be in
UK cinemas from December 21st.



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CAPOLAVORO HORROR



by John Townsend

It's regarded as a genuine classic of Italian cinema – hence our title, which translates as Horror Masterpiece – so let's find out why as we take a look at DARIO ARGENTO's PROFONDO ROSSO – DEEP RED...

In 1963, legendary Italian director Mario Bava released *La ragazza che sapeva troppo* (*The Evil Eye*). It was a mystery-fuelled romp of a film that twists and turns throughout in stark black and white. Bava's next film, *Sei donne per l'assassino* (*Blood and Black Lace*), was considerably more important though. This was a film of outrageous colours with a sweeping, almost uncontrollable camera and stylised moments of brutal violence. Its significance comes from the genre it ushered in; a genre that would provide a creative outlet for the baroque imaginations of a select group of Italian filmmakers. Those films are renowned for cruel, often indulgent murders, exuberant colour palettes and a central mystery the director will do anything to cloak in a cape of convolution. Those films are rightly revered and respected. Those films are *giallo*, and the greatest exponent of the genre was Dario Argento.

After an early career penning screenplays for second rate spaghetti westerns, Argento's first contribution of note was to Sergio Leone's *Once Upon*

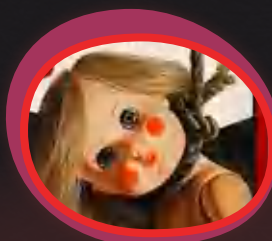
A Time in the West in 1968. Despite the success of that film, Argento's interest lay more in horror-inflected thrillers pioneered by auteurs such as Alfred Hitchcock and Fritz Lang. Heavily influenced by Bava, Argento's début feature *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*) in 1970 stuck to the basic giallo template, but added a refreshing new dimension. Alongside the familiar tropes, the director introduced a cool paranoia mixed with a biting energy that was reflected in the bold sexual politics. It was with *Profondo rosso* (*Deep Red*) in 1975 that Argento really found his feet in the genre and also opened up a supernatural element that he would explore in several later films. It was also the film that would seal his place in history and is not only the director's best work, but the best of the giallo films.

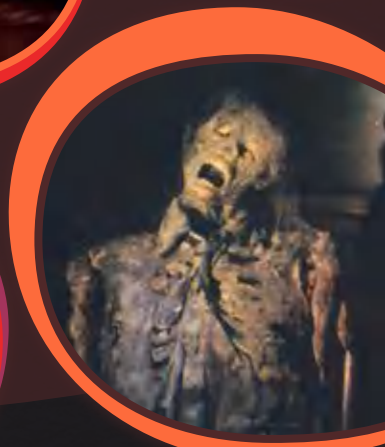
After two fairly dull and poorly written attempts following his auspicious introduction, Argento seemed

to undergo something of a cinematic transformation. Familiar giallo tropes exist in *Profondo rosso*, but Argento blends and distorts them with a newly found confidence as a filmmaker. After witnessing the brutal murder of one of his neighbours, British jazz musician and teacher Marcus Daly (David Hemmings) sets off on his own rather bumbling investigation. Aided, or mostly not, by the formidable and sexually forward journalist Gianni Brezzi (Argento regular and then wife, Daria Nicolodi), Daly struggles to remember a key element from the murder scene that may unlock the mystery as he seeks the elusive masked killer.

With the introduction of the supernatural (the first victim we see was a psychic), Argento opens up a new aspect with which to further baffle and confuse his audience. Not only is there the unknown killer rampaging around mercilessly, but there is a now a noticeable foreshadowing to the crimes and an underlying feeling that is almost impossible to fully put your finger on. This sense of the unknown, of chaos existing behind the façade of normality is a key trait of Argento and is one that runs through many of the films that followed *Profondo rosso*. Many of the prominent giallo themes are here; the brutal murders, the prowling camera, the amateur investigator, but Argento allowed his creative side to run riot. This is a film of contrasting personas and beliefs, of supernatural precognition and of dark secrets. It is a film that showcases Argento's decadent camera work, of wildly original fixed camera angles and sweeping, almost unsustainable, flourishes. The complex plot is peppered with a mystical eeriness that often presents more questions than it answers, but the intrigue that germinates while viewing is reflected in Daly's own stunted investigation. Just like the central 'hero', you also feel you're missing something blatantly obvious; and upon second viewing, as you wander around the first murder scene with Daly, you'll realise how obvious that actually is.

Another example of Argento's burgeoning understanding of his craft is in the foreshadowing of the murders. Each death follows a similarly-themed accident.





Moments before a character meets their end in a bath of boiling water, Daly scalds himself on a coffee machine. These indulgences and possibly inconsequential motifs serve to ground the murders, giving a sense of reality to crimes that would possibly have felt more distant if committed with knife or gun. We can all relate to how hot water feels on skin or how much a stubbed toe or a bruised eye can hurt, and when those incidental accidents are scaled up to murder they carry a deeper recognition and linger longer in the memory.

Repeat viewing of *Profondo rosso* rewards the viewer much more than any other of Argento's works. Never has the director's often hidden but slyly mischievous sense of humour been more prevalent than in this film. Despite the intricacies of the plot, the clues to the killer are all clear; if you know where to look, that is. Not only is the 'reveal' evident in the first victim's apartment, the story is full of clues and nods that are too easy to overlook while watching, but that are frustratingly obvious when you know how the film ends. The darkly sinister house that Daly explores looking for answers turns

out to be full of what he seeks, while those answers are too often just out of the reach of the struggling sleuth, they offer intrigue and a knowing satisfaction when the film is viewed again.

Most of the films of the great giallo era are notable for their soundtracks and *Profondo rosso* contains one that is both typical of the genre but more sinisterly inflected and invasive than most. Regular collaborators Goblin created a jazz-rock blend of sound that perfectly contrasts Argento's striking visuals, and a sound that not only compliments the film's murderous intrigue but effectively adds to the supernatural atmosphere. Goblin's unique style benefitted many of the best films of the giallo period but rarely did their throbbing music fit as perfectly as it does in *Profondo rosso*; just like one of the killer's trademark leather gloves.

Profondo rosso is not only the most important entry in Argento's filmography, it is the key entry in the giallo canon. There are other great films from one of the most productive periods of Italian cinema, but none quite reach the heights of *Profondo rosso*. Lucio Fulci's *Non si sevizia un paperino* (*Don't Torture A Duckling*) is significant for its rural, peasant setting that contradicts the urban beauty present in the majority of giallo films, and also for its sweeping score by Ennio Morricone. More famous, or possibly infamous, for his cannibal films, Umberto Lenzi

made several giallo films, but a trend

towards more of a fun element was noticeable, and if wanton indulgence is your thing then Sergio Martino produced an interesting series of films, all of which were brutally shocking in places, but perhaps more superficial in style.

Dario Argento's films offer something different that was rarely seen in the genre. His later works, particularly *The Three Mothers Trilogy* of *Suspiria*, *Inferno* and *Tenebrae*, all play around with the giallo style more than *Profondo rosso* but while beautifully horrific in their own right, never quite match the energy and style of this predecessor. It is rare for a film to not only define a genre, but an era in the way *Profondo rosso* does. This is a seminal work from a director who was never more inspired as he was in 1975.



ARROW VIDEO release PROFONDO ROSSO on December 7th in a special edition 3-disc set – including the Director's Cut (running 127mins) and a new 4K scan of the International Cut of DEEP RED (105mins), plus a plethora of extras including a soundtrack CD and featurettes.



RIGHTFUL REVENGE?

by Martin Unsworth



With the third film released recently, and the appearance of the remake and sequel on British TV, we take a look at the updates of the controversial *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE* and ponder - can cinema go too far?



When the remake of Meir Zarchi's controversial 1978 classic *I Spit on Your Grave* was released in 2010, many fans were in outrage. The contentious subject wasn't the only sticking point. Why touch something that has become as revered as it is reviled? Could the new filmmaker, Steven R. Monroe, manage to out-do the original in terms of terror and repulsion? Times have changed; attitudes towards the depiction of sexual abuse have changed, and quite rightly. So how could we accept such vile images on screen these days and still 'enjoy' the movies? It's a difficult, complex ethical dilemma to ponder, and one that will probably never have a conclusive answer.

No matter how tastefully such actions are portrayed, there will also be a large majority of the audience repelled, and at the very least made to feel very uncomfortable. And quite right, too; there should be **no-one** who finds the rape, torture, and humiliation of another human being entertaining. Does that mean it shouldn't be included in the film, though? These things do happen in real life already - shockingly, some cultures even appear to think it's alright - and possibly,

showing how downright horrific it is could be just enough to make those who joke about such things think twice. Just as the 1978 film made the audience feel for protagonist Jennifer, the remake and its sequel put the viewer through the emotional wringer before we get to the more satisfying payoff.

Essentially a straight re-do of the original, the 2010 version sees Sarah Butler play author Jennifer Hills, who heads off to a lakeside cabin to begin writing her second novel. It's here she falls foul of a group of locals who are so backwards they misinterpret her 'fun' attitude to be something much more flirty. She is horrifically gang raped, degraded, and left for dead. One member of the mob happens to be the local sheriff and have a wife and kids, something that makes his involvement even more abhorrent. Another new factor into the ordeal is the use of a video camera to make the humiliation more complete. It's one of the major elements that unsurprisingly prompted the BBFC to cut the film on its release.

The original 1978 version had a well-publicised run-in with the UK censorship body (it was only later they became about



horrific things happen.

It's by chance rather than design that she manages to escape once more, descending this time into the sewers of the city. It's a metaphorical descent as well as literal, as she must attempt to survive in the squalid conditions, resorting to eating whatever wildlife she can find. She does find a (very convenient) route into a church through the cellar, and is caught in the act of stealing some supplies. The priest is the first person she has met who actually treats her like a human, but she's too far gone into a downward spiral that she barely acknowledges his offer of help. He does notice that she has left a Bible open – with one phrase standing out to the man of God: *Vengeance in Mine*.

As one would expect – and certainly hope – Katie has decided to take the law into her own hands and, in keeping with the films' tradition, tracks down the team one by one to inflict as much pain and suffering as possible upon the scum who violated her. Now, this should be the part of the movie in which the audience gets the payoff for the horrendously gruelling hour that has preceded it. Instead, the methods of revenge, while certainly nasty, are not really as horrible as we'd like them to be. These men deserve more than being left to die with festering wounds, being electrocuted

classification) and is still unavailable in a fully intact form over here. The remake suffered forty-three seconds of cuts, while the second was shorn of twenty seconds short of two minutes of footage. However, it was pre-cut prior to submission after an unfinished version was seen by the board, and twenty-seven separate cuts recommended.

The revenge part of the remake is somewhat troublesome due to the tone. Following the unrelenting nastiness of the first half, Jennifer's reprisal is almost in the vein of the *Saw* movies, with an increasing level of 'cool' kills and graphic gore. Just the sort of thing the horror fans want, right? The problem is it trivialises the violation that has gone before.

I Spit on Your Grave 2 was a sequel no one really wanted. The remake managed to make money and stir up enough controversy while at the same time not be as completely offensive as expected; could a follow-up really add anything new to the scenario?

In this film, Jemma Dallender (best known for 2012's low budget Brit horror *Community* and TV's *Hollyoaks*) plays a model, Katie, who is advised to expand her portfolio with some new pictures in order to get more work. Going to one company who seem to be offering a good deal, she sensibly doesn't fall into the sleazy trap of stripping off for the photographs, but in doing so starts a horrific chain of events that leads her to the metaphorical depths of hell.

One of the photography assistants appears at her apartment offering her the photos they took for free. But of course, everything has a price. He forces himself upon her, and brutally overpowers her. Katie's next door neighbour attempts to help

after hearing her harrowing screams, but is stabbed and left to bleed to death on the floor of the living room, watching her being defiled and abused in his dying moments.

Katie's ordeal has only just started, though, as her attacker's 'brothers' – the rest of the photography crew – arrive to clear up his mess (and an offhand comment suggests it's not for the first time, either) and decide to drug her and take her away.

She awakes in a dank basement, with one of the men once again defiling her. The torment continues with torture, humiliation and some deeply distressing scenes. Even when she manages to escape, things are bad. It turns out she has been taken to Budapest. The police officer who picks her up doesn't appear to be as proactive as you'd expect, and Katie just wants to leave; to go home.

She is picked up by a woman from a local shelter, and the police let Katie go with her; it's another big mistake as she is in cahoots with the gang, and ends up back in the basement to have even more





However, we are even though she's a raging ball of anger and violence. We know what she - and the others - have been through. So maybe we don't need to see it depicted so graphically in the first place?

Movies have the power to make us feel uncomfortable, and face things we don't want to, and by doing so, provoke a certain response. It's important that they are allowed to carry on doing so, but we have to trust the filmmakers' integrity when they present it to us. Exploitation cinema is built on films like *I Spit on Your Grave*. It should make us question why we watch them, but ultimately, it should make us want the actions to only be represented on the screen. Films such as these should be repulsive, because that's what they depict. It's up to us as viewing adults to choose if we can handle and process what we see in a right way.

I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE and *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE 2* are screening on Horror Channel in November. *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE 3: VENGEANCE IS MINE* is out now on DVD and Blu-ray.

with a cattle prod (something Katie herself had to endure) and being drowned in a nightclub toilet – one that is full to the brim with the brown stuff... The real 'nasty' retribution comes when one of the crew has his knackers put in a vice, which is slowly (and explosively!) closed. While this is certainly the least they deserved, one would have expected something much more ghastly considering how much poor Katie went through.

Now, we're not here to say that taking the law into your own hands is right, but vengeance is surely the reason these films exist, and we can't as an audience be expected to allow such terrible acts committed on these women to go unpunished in a less than over the top way. We've had to sit through Katie getting the most appalling treatment, and perhaps we would expect the resulting carnage to be a little more fitting. Just as we mentioned the first film stylising the revenge aspect, by not going too far, it feels like a cop out. Have we really become that desensitised?

Just released is the third in the series, and it surprisingly takes a different route. Sarah Butler returns as Jennifer Hills, in a new town and under a new name, Angela. Undergoing therapy still after the traumatic events, she fantasises about hurting people all around her. She finally makes a friend in a support group, but when she is raped and killed, she once again takes the law into her own hands; "*Justice isn't something you receive, it's something you dish out*" she tells her shrink.

What's different about the third film, subtitled *Vengeance is Mine*, is that the audience isn't made to suffer through a disturbing and protracted abuse to get to the scenes of retaliation, although it's clear how much suffering has gone on with the characters in the past, and almost every male introduced is a sleazeball 'asking for it'. There's one particular moment that is more graphic and eye-watering than anything that has gone before in any of the other films,

and certainly makes the infamous bathtub scene in the '78 version look like PG material (lest we forget, you don't actually see anything in there).

It's almost telling that the third instalment has been passed uncensored by the BBFC. With no explicit sexual violence towards the women (the same can't be said for the men, there are a couple of very nasty moments), it's almost as though it was waved through. Without the motivation to be behind the avenging angel Angela/Jennifer, we shouldn't really be on her side.



HORROR

Obscura

This month, the Manchurian Martin Unswoth takes a trip with a pair of horror icons and a murderous missing link...



Although the partnership of Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing is synonymous with Hammer films, the pair being the mainstay of the studio's output in the glory years, they also appeared together in several other films. Arguably the most memorable of these was the Italian-made *HORROR EXPRESS*...

ALL ABOARD

Released in 1972, it's the most widely remembered film from Spanish director Eugenio Martin and came at a time when Hammer's Dracula series was winding up. Lee was famously disillusioned with the ever-decreasing quality of the vampire movies, yet continued making them due to the studio's 'emotional blackmail' (they claimed they had already sold the distribution rights with Lee attached, and should he refuse to appear, the crew would be out of a job). His questionable quality control didn't stop him appearing in numerous other European-made films of varying standards, such as numerous Jess Franco films (including the now-shockingly-un-PC Fu Manchu films) and woeful French 'comedy' *Dracula père et fils* (*Dracula and Son*). There were highpoints, of course. Several films for Amicus were wonderful fun, and although they don't share the screen, he appears alongside Cushing in the bat-shit crazy but brilliant *Scream and Scream Again* (1973). Their final coupling came in 1983 when the pair teamed up with fellow horror legends Vincent Price and John Carradine for *House of Long Shadows*, directed by exploitation legend Pete Walker from a script by Michael (Mark of the Devil) Armstrong.

However, *Horror Express* stands head-and-shoulders above those films despite

being rather neglected over the years. So much so, that it fell into the public domain causing numerous poor quality versions to be released, and making it a mainstay on those channels that only show crackly, faded old films and TV shows late at night. There was a time when you could switch on the BBC and see the film regularly, and it's been conspicuous by its absence on terrestrial television for a while, but the Beeb finally managed to give the movie another airing last month, appropriately on Halloween night. One would expect a public domain title to be awful and barely watchable; to have only kitsch value, like movies such as *Plan 9 from Outer Space* or *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians*. Not so. In fact, just like those aforementioned flicks, this almost forgotten gem is a rich and enjoyable example of horror cinema. And it's Lee and Cushing that make it so. An appearance by Telly Savalas just adds a little bit of sweet icing on the top of this deliciously filling fruity cake.

Professor Saxton (Lee) is on an expedition in Manchuria and has come across the frozen remains of what he believes to be 'the missing link' in human evolution. As he prepares to make his way through Russia with his find, he's frustrated to discover his reservation on board the Trans-Siberian Express has not been received, and there

is no seat for him. While trying to sort this out, another traveller appears. Dr Wells (Cushing), an old acquaintance, exchanges pleasantries with Saxton; although one gets the feeling early on there is some rivalry and little love lost between them. Introducing the professor to his assistant Miss Jones (Alice Reinheart), as someone who "*Dabbles in fossils and bones*", the disgust is clearly apparent upon Saxton's face. Miss Jones, Wells tells him, is an excellent bacteriologist technician. "*For a woman, he means*", she wryly adds. It's this sparkingly witty dialogue that continues throughout the film, and it's due to this humour that it is so enjoyable. Wells annoys Saxton even more by bribing the ticket officer to secure two rooms on the train. He finally gets one when the local police reveal they've been ordered to offer any help he needs.

While they're waiting for the crate containing the find to be loaded onto the train, a thief is seen found dead in the station, his eyes as white as a blind man and blood oozing from his extremities. A strange agitated monk, Father Pujardov (Alberto de Mendoza, doing a passable impression of Paul Naschy), who is travelling with a Count and Countess, believes it to be the work of Satan, and when he attempts to draw a cross on Saxton's crate in chalk, no mark is made, proving his point (to him at least), "*Where evil lives there*



is no place for the cross". Despite finally getting a ticket for the train, Saxton finds out he has to share a bunk with Wells, and the pair have another dilemma as a young woman has stowed away and is begging their help to leave Shanghai.

Curious as to what the fossil is and why Saxton is being so secretive about his discovery, Wells bribes a baggage handler to discreetly drill a hole in the crate so he can have a peek inside. However, when the hapless worker does this, he is attacked and killed by whatever is in the container: a creature with glowing red eyes. The handler's own eyes then glaze over and seep blood. The following day, there's no sign of the baggage handler, and Wells confesses to paying him to see what was in the crate. The police inspector demands the crate be opened, much to the annoyance of Saxton. Breaking through the chains, they find it now only contains the corpse of the worker, leading Saxton to proclaim that the fossilised creature is alive and on the loose. Naturally.

The inspector insists that no one says anything to protect the other passengers, but that doesn't stop him interrupting Wells while he's eating dinner with the stowaway woman and another passenger, prompting another classic exchange. *"Is it true you're a doctor?" "Ask me when I've finished*

dinner" Wells replies. *"It's urgent..."* Wells sighs, and begrudgingly asks, *"What are the symptoms?" "He's dead."* The gems continue when Wells asks Miss Jones, sitting at another table, for her assistance. *"Yes, well at your age I'm not surprised,"* she quips, looking over to the beautiful woman sat at the doctor's table. *"With an autopsy!" "Oh well, that's different"*.

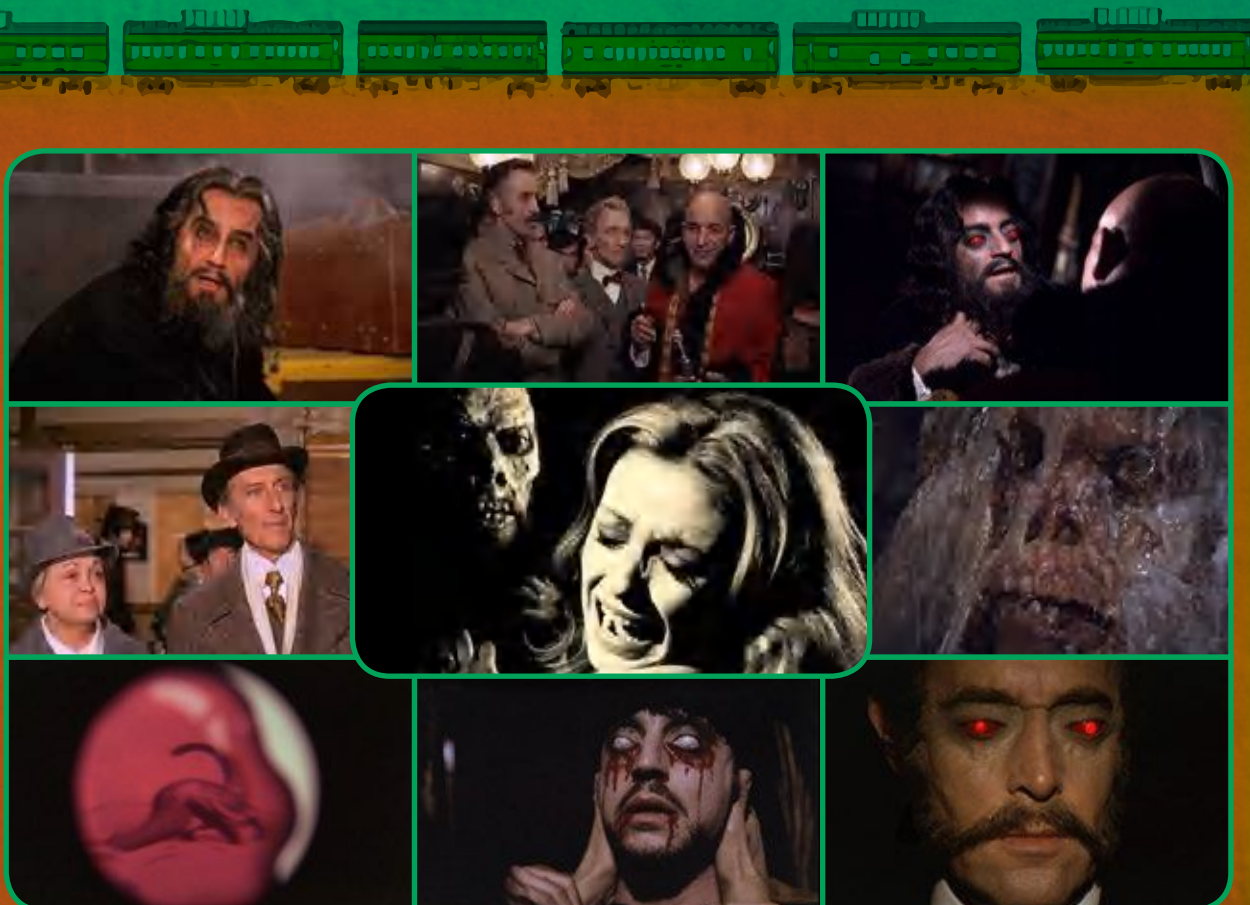
As they perform the autopsy, they find that, not only does the man have blank eyes, but the brain has been 'wiped clean' of all its memories, which is obviously what you would surmise when you find an unwrinkled brain (*"As smooth as a baby's bottom"* as Miss Jones puts it). He comes to the conclusion the creature is taking the memories and knowledge from its victims. A seamlessly obvious assumption, of course.

The mysterious stowaway is revealed to be a spy looking to steal a secret invention (steel harder than a diamond) from the Count and Countess, but is killed by the creature before she can get away with the goods. The beast, however, is gunned down by the inspector (of police, not ticket inspector, of course). Although the body has been stopped, the creature transfers its powers and memories to the inspector. While everyone is breathing a sigh of relief, Saxton and Wells have

teamed up to examine the remains of the monster. They remove its eye, take a sample of liquid from it, and are shocked to discover images embedded into the liquid. They are of the last thing it saw - the inspector - but further samples reveal even more surprises; prehistoric creatures (*"a brontosaurus!"*), and then even more startling - the earth from outer space! The creature is in fact, an alien form that was using the human body as a host. The missing link was just one in a line of conduits for the entity to survive. Naturally, with the usual discretion, they show the discoveries to the Countess, who just so happens to stop by while they're discussing it. She, in turn, insists on showing Pujardov, who just takes it as even further proof of Satanic forces at work, and steals the eye from under their noses.

The inspector, in the meantime, is doing his best to avoid suspicion, which is actually quite hard seeing as one hand is now hairy and clawed like the creature, even going so far as to suggest our protagonists may be the host. *"The two of you together, that is fine... but what if one of you is the monster?"* To which the ever-affable Wells responds, *"Monster? We're British, don't you know!"*

The killings do indeed continue despite the best attempts to uncover the creature,



and even after the intervention of Captain Kazan, a terrifying despot Cossack, played with gusto by Telly Savalas, who boards the train and attempts to get to the bottom of things by using brute force ("Let's move these peasants out of here!"). It's during the scuffles with Kazan that Pujardov gives the game away. By protecting the inspector so much, he instantly puts him under suspicion, and he is revealed as the host. Shot and dying, he transfers the life force and knowledge to Pujardov, who, despite being stark raving mad, tries to reason with Saxton, pleading with him to let him live so that the alien life form that has been on the planet for two million years can continue to thrive, to help humanity, even. He may not be so altruistic, though, as all the murdered people begin to rise from the dead, and attack.

For such a throwaway Euro-shocker, *Horror Express* has so much going for it. The script, as preposterous as it is, has so many wonderful elements that it's never dull and, as mentioned, the humour is so intrinsically British that it beats Hammer at its own game.

Cushing and Lee are at their top form, and play well off each other. For once, neither is cast in the villainous role, although Lee is certainly acidic and pompous for the most part. It's a

characteristic he always played well, even in real life. Cushing had not long lost his beloved wife (which he famously never got over), and he threw himself into the role, as he always did.

The score, by John Cacavas, is fantastically atmospheric; he would later write music for Hammer (*The Satanic Rites of Dracula*) and score the *Kojak* TV series that would make Savalas a worldwide icon. It also boasts some fun gore, particularly in the autopsy scenes, in which we see the top of the skull being lifted from the head like a cap.

The story is loosely adapted from John W. Campbell, Jr.'s *Who Goes There?* - albeit uncredited. It's the story that was adapted into 1951 sci-fi classic *The Thing from Another World* and John Carpenter's seminal *The Thing* in 1982. It arguably makes a better fist of the material than the version produced by Howard Hawks for RKO in the fifties. The emphasis there was on the creature (famously referred to as a vegetable - "An intellectual carrot! The mind boggles!"), whereas both *Horror Express* and *The Thing* make the transference of the alien life form into a human (or, indeed, animal as they are mentioned in the former, and utilised in the latter) the prime focus of the horror.

As mentioned earlier, the film is considered public domain and can be found and downloaded legally on the Internet, but all those versions are terrible quality. It's so great, we'd suggest you purchase the American (Region A) Blu-ray released by Severin a few years ago, it's like watching a brand new film; even the old BBC broadcasts didn't look this clear. Who knows, maybe one of the fabulous UK distributors will take the title and give it a chance over here. The PD reputation has clearly harmed it, but *Horror Express* certainly isn't a dud.

Horror Express comes from a time when films were swift, and there's no messing about in the plot or action, we've had the initial kill within the first ten minutes, and we've seen the creature not too long after. This briskness of pace makes for an exhilarating and fun ninety minutes; forget the obligatory awful dubbing always found in these Euro productions (as they often had an international cast it was common for these films to be shot silently, with the actors merely mouthing the dialogue that was looped in later on. All three main stars provide their own voices here). It's undoubtedly one train journey you won't regret taking.





INDEPENDENTS DAY

by John Knott

SIMON PEARCE and PAUL DUDBRIDGE

A couple of months back, **STARBURST** was mightily impressed by the DVD release of Simon Pearce's **JUDAS GHOST** (2013). A low budget one-room ghost-hunting romp, it was thoroughly entertaining and defiantly non-indie looking. Since then, Simon's teamed up with fellow Bristolian Paul Dudbridge to bring you the even more economic web series **HORIZON**. Quite an achievement, as alien invasions are traditionally regarded as a bit pricey. We caught up with Simon and Paul to discuss learning to love horror (but not zombies), future plans and the destruction of Bristol...

STARBURST: How did you get into directing?

Simon Pearce: My parents work in film. One day, dad showed me a Bond film he was cameraman on (*GoldenEye*) and said 'this is the kind of thing I do'. When I was twelve, I made films with the family video camera and although I didn't know the name for what I was doing, there was something about the process I really liked.

Paul Dudbridge: Dad bought a Betamax camera when I was eleven. I began shooting my own short *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-inspired films and it went from there. I've been shooting films each year since then. I turned freelance about 10 years ago and now I get to do it for a living.

Simon, you've said that horror/sci-fi was never your plan. What was your thing?

SP: Gritty thrillers. I didn't have anything against horror, but it wasn't something I watched and I didn't know anything about it. I grew up on Jet Li and Jackie Chan movies. I'm a big fan of Michael Mann and Paul Greengrass' Bourne movies. To be honest, I was a bit of a wimp when it came to horror.

Hence your first feature: *Shank* (2009)

SP: I was actually making a 24 fan-film called *60* which took place over an hour with local actor Bernie Hodges. He mentioned some friends who'd written a film for the LGBT market and needed a director. I thought it would be similar to what I'd done before with a twenty quid budget but they'd raised twenty thousand and planned to take it on the festival circuit so I was excited to do it. The writers were sick of that genre being saccharine boy-meets-boy/girl-meets-girl so it was a hard-hitting script about a Bristol boy in a gang coming out. They wanted something edgier and the response from the festivals was that we'd succeeded. Some thought it a bit too full-on but overall it was great: my first chance to go to the film festivals and do a Q&A.

So how did you then end up doing full-on horror like *Judas Ghost*?

SP: I was introduced as a potential director to Simon R. Green, a published horror writer looking to do his own project. He'd had books optioned, but nothing ever came of it and he'd heard horror stories from friends about losing control of their work. So he thought he'd do it himself. As a filmmaker, I just want to entertain so I was happy to give horror a go. He had a body-horror sci-fi script called *The Crooked Man* which looked too expensive, so we talked about *Blair Witch* and *Paranormal* and thought of making a stepping-stone piece to get funding for something bigger. So *Judas Ghost* was based on his *Ghost Finders* series but with different characters. He got me more interested in the idea of doing and watching horror.



HORIZON



What did you watch?

SP: A friend got me watching *The Ring* and *Halloween*, and stuff I'd never seen before: John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness*, *The Haunting*, [REC] (which scared the crap out of me) and *The Exorcist*. Not necessarily stylistic references, but classics and interesting to see what worked and what didn't. I enjoyed *It Follows* and *The Conjuring*, but with Hollywood there's too much of a reliance on jump scares. I got into the whole adrenalin rush of it and wanted to create that for other people.

You had a brilliant set in Judas. We thought it was a real village hall.

SP: Yeah, the production designer did a marvellous job. We thought of finding an actual village hall, but there's the sequence with the blood coming up through the trap door that was going to be messy and then how do you have doors moving about? We'd have to build another door; we'd have to hide the original door. Even practical issues like where to put the actors when they're not on. We'd need to get trailers and Portaloos. But being in a studio, we could build it exactly as we needed it. There was even a green room upstairs and all the kit was housed there. We didn't even have to worry about the weather and light.

Any problems with horror?

SP: Once it's rehearsed and broken down

shot by shot, it's hard to remind yourself it's horror and keep track of what's scary. With no music, a door is just a door.

So it's hard to be scared by your own movie?

SP: Oh god, yes. When you're editing you're constantly saying 'does that work? I don't know'. You get people in the edit suite you know and trust and ask them if it's scary.

Your father (Roger Pearce) worked on some A-list Hollywood movies but older STARBURST readers might be even more impressed he did *Arthur of the Britons* (the one with Oliver Tobias) and for the true connoisseur of obscure '70s sci-fi telly, he did *Sky*. What was it like having him on board for *Judas*?

SP: Amazing. He's so experienced, but doesn't impose himself. He's humble and soft-spoken; he'd suggest things but never force them on you. We tossed some ideas around in pre-production and he did some storyboards, but I never felt any pressure, it was just a nice working relationship. He just let me do it. He was a great asset.

How did you get the excellent cast for *Judas Ghost*?

SP: I generally do the casting myself by putting a casting-call online, but the only person we got like that was Lucy (Cudden). We tried open casting with seven or eight hundred applications but no-one was right. Reluctantly (due to the budget), we used a casting director

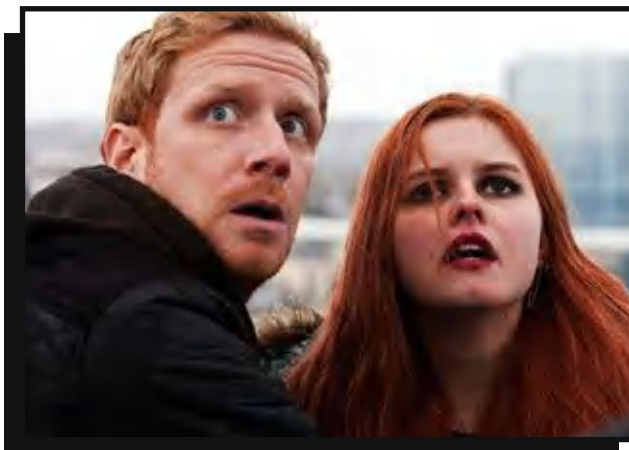
who got the rest. They all just stood out. Martin (Delaney) as Jerry always had a certain kind of charisma.

Simon Merrells was very impressive.

SP: Yes, he was a lead villain in *Spartacus: War of the Damned* and *Tomorrow People* and now he's in *Dominion*. He was great; we really stripped that part down in the end because he could do so much with the look behind his eyes. You could tell he was damaged.

How did the 'look' of Grahame Fox (the titular ghost) come about?

SP: Well, in the script, he's just described as an ordinary man in ordinary clothes. Right away, I thought that's a freaky image but is there anything more we can do? Sam Weekes was doing some of our concept art and he drew this very supernatural demonic figure in a suit but with an inhuman face and I really liked it. A company in London did a prosthetic mask, but when I was interviewing Grahame I thought it was a shame we're going to have to cover up his face and voice because he was great anyway. When we got the prosthetic we had a bit of a panic: it was good, but we thought after about 15 minutes it's going to wear thin. So we thought why don't we use him as he was in the auditions? He's got a bit of 'decayed' make-up and we 'Freddy Kruegered' him a bit but otherwise we just let Grahame be Grahame.



How did you two come to be working together on *Horizon*?

Paul Dudbridge: I was teaching at the ITV West Television Workshop here in Bristol. Simon was one of my students, but we remained friends when he left and have worked together on a lot of projects since.

What was the first foray into sci-fi for both of you?

PD: My usual work is more drama based, but I like sci-fi and the challenge of producing something on a grander scale. SP: I've always liked sci-fi more than horror and Paul came up with the idea of doing a web series. We briefly tossed a zombie idea about...

PD: We wanted to have fun, so it was either going to be zombies or science fiction. *The Walking Dead* had come out and I was a bit tired of the whole zombie thing and couldn't get too excited about it. I could spring off in different directions with sci-fi. I had used a lot of CG and visual effects in past projects but nothing on this scale, so sci-fi also presented a nice opportunity to really develop and push myself.

SP: Paul came up with an alien ship appearing over Bristol and we all loved the idea. We had a lot of discussions about what would happen if a ship appeared, especially if it just sat there without doing anything. How would we react?

PD: It stemmed from a conversation with a colleague of mine who eventually couldn't commit, so I took the idea to Simon and

his usual go-to writing partner Chris Marshfield. Together, we developed a story and went from there. The inspiration for me was the platform; being able to tell a story over a series of episodes and have our own version of *The Walking Dead* or *Lost*. All our other work had been features or short films so drip-feeding the audience and being able to manipulate and tease them with a cliff-hanger was appealing. I grew up on the 60's *Batman* and loved how they always finished on a cliff-hanger; now we could do the same, but in our own way.

How did you write collaboratively?

PD: We all sat and fleshed out the story before dividing up the episodes to be written. I wrote four, Simon five, and Chris one.

SP: We had the A and B of the story and had to fill in the gap. But it was fun, we would sometimes text each other to say we planned something so could you set that up in yours? In Season One, we're focused on the people and their reaction, but Season Two (if it happens) will be more on the bigger picture.

The end was a tease. Had you always planned a sequel?

PD: Oh yes for sure. We've already had a meeting for Season Two; it just depends on how well the first season goes down with the fans!

SP: If it's popular, then we'll crowdfund the second. We've got the ideas!

What were your 'touchstones' for *Horizon*?

PD: TV shows: *Lost* and *The Walking Dead*, but also, dare I say it, *Independence Day*. We're a little more serious than they were, but tonally we're on the same page.

SP: *District 9*, but we wanted it to be quite light and fun with a few dark bits.

Simon, as a director, what was it like being on the other side of the camera?

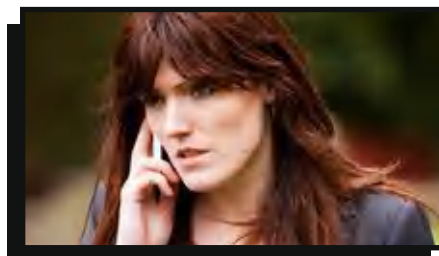
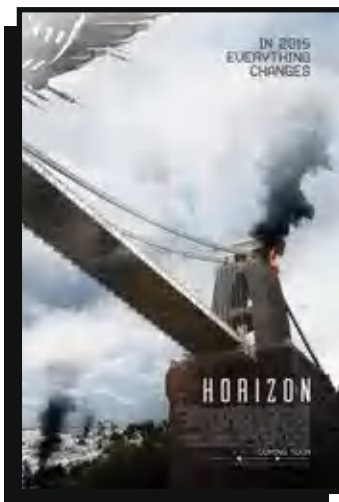
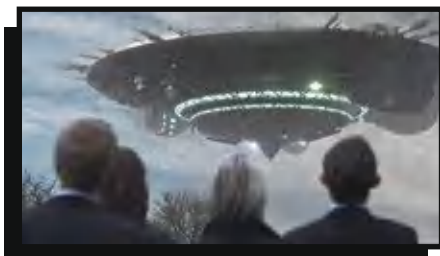
SP: I didn't mind too much, as I was still part of the creative team with the writing. Paul is a good director and friend so I never really thought about it. We did the edit together so it felt collaborative. Originally, the plan was that we'd both direct episodes, but I had a lot of other work on so it didn't pan out like that. But it was like a couple of mates working on something they're really passionate about.

And directing a director?

PD: Joy to work with. Directing a director is always easy as they get your needs and what you're after. When the sun is going down and you just want them to walk over there and say their line, they will. They won't ask about motivation or question the colour of their tie as they appreciate you need to get the shot in the can!

How much did *Horizon* cost?

SP: Well, we were totting it up the other day and we reckon between us we've spent about ten grand.



Was that your own money?

SP: Yeah, but we've called in a lot of favours. We got a lot of stuff for free or very cheap and the costs were spread over 18 months.

That makes *Judas* look pricey. Did it feel like a comedown?

SP: Not really. It was nice to have the full complement of crew on *Judas*, but guerrilla filmmaking is more fun. There's something exciting about being out on the streets or on top of a building and we didn't get the chance with *Judas*, so what we lacked in budget we made up with scale on this one.

Were there any particular challenges with *Horizon*?

PD: It was always the visual effects work. I knew what we could do, but it was just about finding the time and fitting in around the artists and their other work. Everything always takes longer than you think. I knew this going in (or so I thought), so instead of allowing three months, we gave ourselves nine. It ended up taking eighteen! Some shots literally took minutes, some hours. Others took five or six days per shot and we had about 140 in total! The render times for some of the fully CG shots took 40-50 hours to put together within the computer and even then they weren't quite right and had to be masked over or redone.

The effects are impressive for the price.

SP: Yeah, Alan Tabrett and Scott Martin did an amazing job working from home.

It was a passion project for them both because these are guys who design 3D perfume bottles for commercials, but they're sci-fi fans so they loved the idea of jets flying up the Clifton Gorge. That's why it took eighteen months. We couldn't just say you're doing *Horizon* for the next two months because they were doing other work.

There's lots of Bristol-location work on *Horizon*. Did you have problems getting permission or did you go 'guerrilla'?

PD: We only had one issue with a location. Episode Three was due to be shot at an old factory in Bristol, but two days before shooting, I sensed they weren't fully committed and started to look at alternatives. Our instincts were right and they pulled out soon after, but the Bristol Film Office came to our rescue at short notice with a multi-storey car park at the last minute. It turns out this was for the better, as it places the action right in the centre of Bristol and anchors it nicely to the city.

Bristol is integral to the story. Did you enjoy trashing your hometown as much as H. G. Wells did the Home Counties?

PD: Oh yes! Taking a shot of a well-known building and having it on fire or adding a hole in the roof with smoke pouring was great! Having one of our fighter jets crash into the Suspension Bridge was also good fun. That was our *Independence Day* homage. SP: Loved it. We also trashed Colston Tower but we cut that.

What are you working on at the moment?

SP: Well, Stephen King does this thing called Dollar Babies where you can apply for the rights to one of his short stories for a dollar. A writer who has acquired one had seen *Judas* and asked me to adapt it. It can only be a non-profit short film, but I loved the script. One of the rules is that we have to make it within 12 months, so we'll be shooting it in January. It'll cost twenty grand or more as it's very ambitious, so we'll probably go for crowd-sourcing. But both *Shank* and *Judas* came about when I was trying to get other things off the ground, so you never know. And there's always *The Crooked Man*, which I still want to do. Other than that, the day job is editing. PD: Besides Season Two of *Horizon*, I have a feature planned for next year. It's a hospital siege action/thriller so no science fiction in that. I suppose we could look at a *Horizon* movie...

Simon, any more horror?

SP: Well a lot of people might roll their eyes, but there's this idea with an 'expendable' team of mercenaries in a mountain complex in Afghanistan who encounter some sort of demonic force. *Event Horizon* meets *Zero Dark Thirty*; a bit sci-fi-ish. That's something I'm developing.

You'll need flamethrowers.

SP: I'll make a note of that.

JUDAS GHOST is available on DVD and you can watch *HORIZON* online at horizonwebseries.com.





REVIEW:



JUDAS GHOST

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SIMON PEARCE
/ SCREENPLAY: SIMON R. GREEN
/ STARRING: MARTIN DELANEY,
LUCY CUDDEN, SIMON MERRELLS,
ALEXANDER PERKINS, GRAHAME FOX /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In the topsy-turvy world of cult journalism, it probably won't surprise you to know that one comes across a lot of independent movies. Now, don't get us wrong here; a lot of them are rather good. Not constrained by the mores of mainstream cinema, rules can be daringly ignored and ground fearlessly broken. However, it has to be said that as worthy as these movies can be, those miniscule budgets mean that you have to cut them a bit of slack. Mates of the director might be cast in key roles, FX may be strained to the point of breaking and, we suspect, the on-set catering may have been on the basic side. So it comes as a great pleasure (and a bit of a change) to find oneself watching a thoroughly indie flick and, by the halfway point, realising that you'd forgotten it was made for next to nothing.

The first thing *Judas Ghost* gets right is a fairly good story penned by Simon R. Green and based on his own *Ghost Finders* novels. So we have a team of professional ghost-hunters dispatched from the Carnacki Institute to a seemingly benign village hall to do something about recent weird goings-on. Looks like a simple job, so they even have a cameraman in tow to shoot a training film for the new recruits. Of course, it turns out to be far from straightforward (otherwise it'd be a bit of a dull movie) and before we know it, we've got moving doorways, unrelenting darkness, buckets of blood, genuine mystery and

more mild-to-extreme peril than you can wave a holy water popsicle at.

We all love professional ghost/vampire/alien hunters, so it's off to a good start from the get-go and setting the entire film in one room is, of course, a very clever move when you don't have the cash to spend. It's actually a very convincing and specially-built set (in Portishead, of all places) so director Simon Pearce gets the most out of the chosen location with more flexibility than the real thing would provide. But it's the basics that count, so the engaging script and more than capable cast make up for any other shortfalls. Martin Delaney as team leader Jerry might be on the verge of irritating, but as Jerry is a supremely over-confident egotist who loves the fact that he's starring in the training film, we think he got this pitch-perfect. He's exactly the kind of dolt who might just say 'we don't take shit from the afterlife' and actually believe it. And Simon Merrells adds some genuine class as the cameraman with a mysterious past. Horror fact-fans will be fascinated to know he was Benicio Del Toro's brother in *The Wolfman* (2010). Add a bit of well-judged humour, a nice turn from Grahame Fox as the inevitable and rather well-done titular ghost, and you've got an entertaining movie. Result.

Basically, Simon Pearce has done a lot with what he's got here and while *Judas Ghost* isn't actually terrifying, it's certainly chilling enough to do the job and we wouldn't hesitate to recommend the DVD or getting it from one of the major streaming providers.



WELCOME TO THE FREAK SHOW

WORDS: MARTIN UNSWORTH

The touring carnival **CIRCUS OF HORRORS** are celebrating their 21st year in the business, and have embarked on yet another mammoth tour following high profile appearances all over the world, including being finalists on TV's **BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT**. We grilled Ringmaster Dr Haze about the show...

S **TARBURST:** How did the *Circus of Horrors* come about?

Dr Haze: We started nearly 21 years ago now, a godson of mine was performing an act inappropriately enough called the Wheel of Death. He was 21 years old, and it was at the Blackpool Tower circus; there was a big revolving structure with two cages either end, and unfortunately, he fell off the top and died. It happened on Boxing Day, 1994; I got a call from his dad in the middle of the night to say what had happened. I went over to console the family the next day as I was down the road in Preston, and I met Gerry Cottle there. He was a circus entrepreneur and he'd gone with the same intentions as I had, to help look after the family. So we got talking and I told him about the *Circus of Horrors* that I'd been doing – touring the student venues and rock clubs and the like – and I told him I wanted to make it bigger and start doing it in circus tents. There had been a show in the UK called *Circus Archaos*, who were from France originally but had toured all over the

place and had done very well in Britain; it was the first of the alternative circuses – it was the benchmark for all the different types of circuses. As great as the show was, they weren't good businessmen and kept going bankrupt, so there was this big gap in the market, so I thought it would be great to do a *Circus of Horrors* to fill that void. I persuaded Gerry to do it, and started at Glastonbury Festival 1995. It was a huge success; it took a few days, though, as no one knew what it was. But once it started, it became a rip-roaring success. Within a few months, we were doing other shows around the UK and other festivals, then we started going abroad and it really went from strength to strength. This year alone we've done 100-date theatre tour, have been to Japan and just come back from Moscow. It's now Britain's greatest circus export, and now on a UK tour.

There's a narrative to each tour, can you tell us a little bit about this show?

The 21st anniversary is coming up next year, so we started the tour late October and





are running around. The first tour we did was called *Welcome to the Freak Show*, so we've done a variation on that and called it *Welcome to the CarnEvil*. I always thought it was a great show, but we didn't do it quite right as it was the first time we'd performed in theatres, we weren't sure how to do the show best in a two dimensional setting as opposed to a circle as we'd been in a circus tent. We thought - great subject matter, let's go back to that, so that's what we're doing. It's set in 1899, the last year of Victoria's reign, Jack the Ripper was on the loose, freak shows were all over the place, The Elephant Man, all that sort of imagery you can imagine. So, some young kids wake up, see the circus is in town, want to run away and join them, but they don't realise what they've got themselves into.

Have there been any mishaps on the road over the years?

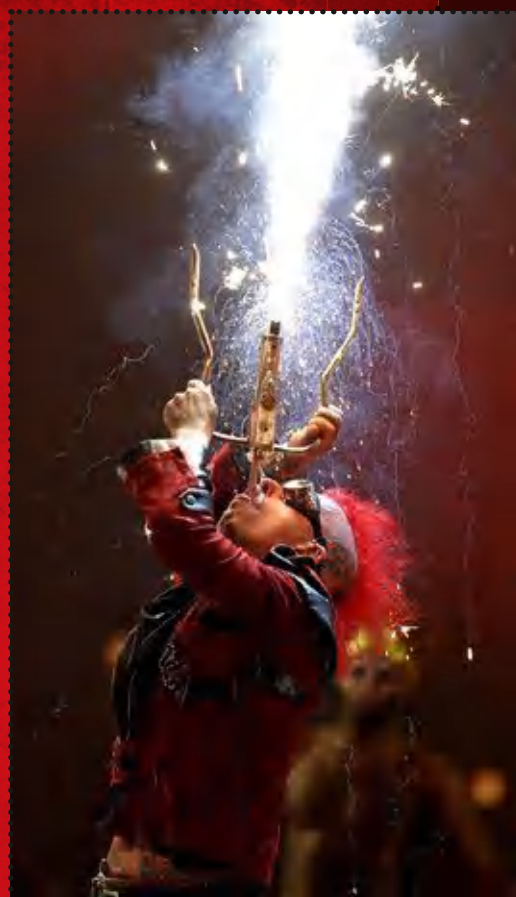
There's been a few, yeah! The sword

swallower's had two accidents. He swallowed a sword at one point and pushed it through his oesophagus. He went to hospital for a few weeks, then a few years later, was swallowing a lit neon tube. The one he had was broken - and it's the most dangerous thing you could swallow because if they break inside you, they've got electric in them, mercury, and of course, they're covered in glass, any of those three elements could kill you - so we sent it back to get repaired. When they sent him a new one, it was slightly wider. He carried on doing the show with it, but sadly, it was too wide and ripped a big hole in the oesophagus quite deep down. He was in intensive care, the stomach acids were flowing through the gap, around his lungs and his heart, so they had to drain those. They had to temporarily put him in a coma, but luckily, he did recover, and two months after recovering he was back performing in the show again. And he swallows a neon tube again now!

The other accident was more of a funny one, but probably the most famous one. That was when Captain Dan the Demon Dwarf accidentally superglued his penis to a Hoover at the Edinburgh Festival! He was pulling a Hoover with his penis in the show, as he did every day, but someone stood on the corrugated tube and made a crack in it, so it didn't have a good suction. He decided to superglue it together to repair it, but misread the instructions: thought it said dry in twenty seconds, it actually said dry in twenty minutes, then stuck it on his willy to practice with it, and couldn't get it off. We ended up carrying him to A&E with a corrugated tube and Henry Hoover stuck to his willy, and, of course, that got front page of *The Sun*, and loads of publicity.

Have there been any places where you've run into trouble with censorship?

When we went to Moscow, they are very strict on certain things; they're still quite homophobic and we have a camp character in the show called Camp Dracula, and, of course, we've got all the controversy with



the stuff that Captain Dan does like hanging bowling balls off his willy, topless nuns coming out of bottles - various things that are a bit controversial. Despite getting Sex Pistols type media over there - we were on every TV show, all the morning shows were showing clips of it, saying how outrageous it was - they didn't actually ban us. They let the show go ahead and it was a huge success, we didn't even have to change any bits. The only thing they were concerned about was we had an old 'flash banner' sign - the sort of thing they had in the 1800s to advertise a circus coming to town, and they'd have pictures of the various acts painted on these canvas structures. We've got those, and one of them has got an image of David Cameron and Nick Clegg conjoined as Siamese Twins; we did it after the last election when there was a coalition, so it was very appropriate. We forgot to change it, basically. We took it to Russia with us, and Nick Clegg had been banned in Russia! They didn't like the image of a banned politician being hung in a theatre in Russia. We appeased them by not using that, we didn't mind because we should have changed it, we were just being a bit lazy! To ask us not to do that was a minor concession.

So they get all the willies and boobs, but no Nick Clegg - and they let the other dick in? Yeah, that's right!

How do you go about finding such unique performers?

Various ways, really - a lot find us! It's quite





"CAPTAIN DAN THE DEMON DWARF ACCIDENTLY SUPERCLUED HIS PENIS TO A HOOVER AT THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL!"

a cool show to be in, and you do get a lot of the young circus performers and young freaky performers wanting to join. The old adage of someone wanting to run away and join the circus is genuine! If I put an advert somewhere for auditions, I'm inundated with people. Even if it's like a knife-thrower's assistant or a topless girl in a bottle, you get loads of people applying for it because it's a cool show to perform in so loads of the circus performers from all over the world get in touch with us and say they'd like to come and work for the *Circus of Horrors*. All the young ones, because it's got rock music, a fan base; the audiences don't just applaud, they go mad! And, of course, it's the biggest freak show in the world so if they want to work for a freak show, we'd be top of their list. I do get these bizarre and interesting people. Most of them wouldn't get in the show, but every so often, you do find a gem.

Are there any new acts on this tour?

There are a few new people, but because it's an anniversary tour, we've actually

brought a few back. We've got this great dislocating contortionist. We found him in Russia a few years ago, he worked for us for a season and he was great, but we wanted to change the show, so the last couple of years he wasn't in it. But we thought as we're doing an evil carnival sort of thing again, he'd be perfect. He doesn't contort like a normal contortionist, he twists his whole arms so they pop out of their sockets at the back and go the opposite way around. When you see it, it's remarkable. His arms will go right round to the front of his body, while ours will only go to our back.

So like a band bringing back a classic hit?

Yes, it's very much like that. We always try to do a new show every year, but it's like a band going out on tour and not playing their greatest hits. If you do that, the audience is quite disappointed. You might want to hear some new songs, but also you want to hear the biggest hits, so that's what we try to do. We always have new bits to it, always have new songs, but always have an element of the greatest hits to it too.

It's a long tour, how do you recover afterwards?

Generally, I get withdrawal symptoms at the end of it, 'cos I love doing it so much. When we finish a tour, you're sat at home at 7 o'clock watching *Coronation Street*, and as much as I like that, it's not the same as

being in the *Circus of Horrors*. I actually like living in hotels and going to different places. This year's been great as we've been all over the world, and that continues. In the middle of the UK tour, we also have a Dutch tour, and we're going over to Ireland again, we're going over to Jersey. Next year, we're in negotiations to take the show to China and to the United States, and we return to Russia. It's non-stop at the moment and long may it continue.

The latest tour runs until the end of May 2016 taking in many towns and cities. Check the website circusofhorrors.co.uk for details.



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Christmas

By Samantha Ward

Jolly old Saint Nick isn't the only visitor at the Yuletide time of year. While the fat man in the red suit is there to bestow gifts to children worldwide, those who may have misbehaved could expect a very different visit as is highlighted in **KRAMPUS...**

You better watch out for this year's anticipated anti-Christmas movie from the genre lover that brought us the Halloween favourite *Trick 'r Treat* in 2007, writer and director Michael Dougherty. *Trick 'r Treat* was Dougherty's first feature; though not widely released it gradually gained a cult following, thanks to its plot with four interwoven stories full of hilarities and all the tropes of a chilling horror. With a large and interesting cast, Dougherty proved himself in being able to create something intricate and clever with brilliant plot twists throughout. He certainly likes to add an edge of playfulness and innocence to his holiday-themed films, so we're expecting a similar vibe with his second feature. Though *Krampus* is not an anthology, be sure to expect a similar style to *Trick 'r*

Treat as Dougherty creates fantastical twists at every turn with wonderfully dark and elegant backdrops that pull you into the holiday spirit no matter how wicked it may be.

"He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake..." plays the classic Christmas carol; it should be cheery but performed with eerie instruments you soon interpret the song as a fair warning to what will happen if you don't adhere to these rules. For those who haven't heard about the awesome Alpine folkloric evil Santa Claus, *Krampus* is a devilish anthropomorphic figure with horns and hooves. Originating from Germany it is said that *Krampus* punishes the naughty children during the Christmas season. Across Europe, *Krampusnacht* (*Krampus Night*) sees people dress up as the wicked creature to visit homes and businesses in search of naughty children.

"So be good for goodness sake..." Possibly another twisted tale to persuade your kids to behave, it's actually not so difficult to see the potential malevolence of Santa's realm. *Krampus* may be Santa's evil rival, relative, or even his companion to help him get through his naughty list. There are so many interpretations, and let's be honest, he's also a little bit more exciting than your *Miracle on 34th Street* Santa Claus; there is a lot to be told about this ancient evil that unleashes its wrath on those that despise old Noël.

Horror isn't just for Halloween; it's for Christmas too! We can never go without at least one festive fright each year, so many are coming to our screens of late, especially the ancient folk tale of *Krampus*, which appears to be an ever-growing topic gaining popularity each year. There are so many different stories to tell of St. Nick's counterpart. A great start to this trend is Finnish fantasy horror *Rare Exports* by Jalmari Helander, which was a hit in 2010. With its deadpan humour and Nordic setting, it seems to have opened doors for writers and directors to create their own take on the legend. *Krampus: The Christmas Devil* (2013) by Jason Hull has a pretty good portrayal of the punisher of children and is set for a sequel in 2016 subtitled *The Devil Returns*. This year, however, we have not one, but three films involving this un-merry beastie set to release around the jovial period. Also featuring the *Krampus* is *A Christmas Horror Story* by numerous directors, starring William Shatner playing a radio host who tells some frightful tales on Christmas Eve, each one intertwining as it tells the battle between Santa and *Krampus*. The other is *Krampus: The Reckoning* by Robert Conway, in which a young girl's imaginary friend turns out to be Santa's evil companion. We may well be sick of this yuletide mythology before the year is out, so let's hope they all have something original to add to the concept and genre.



SEASONAL SHOCKS

Evil



Dougherty appears to have pulled off originality with this ancient tale. He's brought fantasy and folklore to the modern everyday family who just want to enjoy Christmas, but alas things don't quite go to plan. Young Max (Emjay Anthony) is having a terrible Christmas as his dysfunctional family clashes over the holiday celebrations. Festive spirits have dwindled within the household and Max gives up on Christmas altogether. In doing so, he unwittingly summons the dark spirit known as Krampus, the punisher of non-believers. It becomes a terrifying night of chilling darkness as this family is forced to work together and fight for each other to survive. With fantastic effects, classic toys come to life with a thirst for blood and the demonic shadow of Saint Nick looks as enigmatic and joyless as ever.

This horror-comedy also stars an array of actors best known for the comedy genre; Adam Scott (*Parks and Recreation*), Toni Collette (*Little Miss Sunshine*), David Koechner (*Anchorman*), Allison Tolman (*Fargo* series) and Conchata Ferrell (*Two and a Half Men*) have all shown their funny bone, and looking at the trailer there will be some hilarious banter between these actors. We also have young Stefania LaVie Owen (*The Lovely Bones*), who gets some rather intense scenes alongside Austrian actress Krista

Stadler (*Lena Rais*) as the wise old lady who knows a good thing or two about the *Krampus* myth. Though not horror regulars, it seems that the cast is perfectly placed in an intimate and cosy location. The simplicity of one setting with an array of mixed talent makes for an interesting combination. The humour comes from the actors and dialogue, with what we've seen so far suggesting a much more sinister and serious horror film; but knowing Dougherty's methods, there will be lots of laughter and shock horror to enjoy.

So far, Dougherty has managed to put himself on the map of genre directors with a handful of horror shorts and a brilliant Halloween feature. Playing homage to all things horror, you can appreciate his love and attention to the genre by taking influence from some of the big names in the genre such as John Landis and the late Wes Craven; he has a lot of fun with the scripts and doesn't take it too seriously. *Krampus* should build reputation Dougherty's reputation for creating entertaining holiday horrors. We wonder what holiday he'll do next? This festive freak show should be wildly entertaining and is set to send some shivers down the spine.

KRAMPUS will terrify UK audiences when it hits cinemas on December 4th.

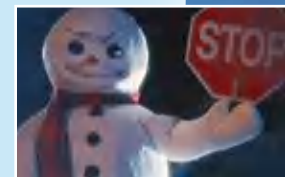
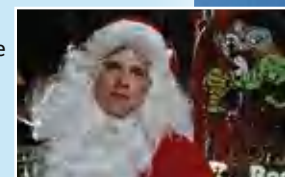
It's natural that this film will be compared to all the Christmas cheer or festive fear that horror has to offer. With a whole hog of festive delights and despair, we look at some of the best and worst that may have had an influence on Dougherty's storytelling with this year's *Krampus*.

Black Christmas (1974), directed by Bob Clark, has the same single house setting, only this is a sorority house that is soon terrorised by a stranger making frightening phone calls and murdering the sorority sisters one by one during Christmas break. The 2006 remake of the same title directed by Glen Morgan shows an escaped maniac returning to his childhood home on Christmas Eve. It is now a sorority house so, to claim back his territory, he begins to murder the sorority sisters one by one.

Silent Night Deadly Night (1984), directed by Charles E. Sellier, Jr., is an effective bad Santa slasher film. Billy Chapman loses his parents due to a hideous murder then the young tormented teenager goes on a murderous rampage dressed as Santa after living in an orphanage where he was abused by the mother superior. Also in 1984 was the very popular *Gremlins* directed by Joe Dante. We all love the little fuzz ball known as Gizmo but if you don't follow the Mogwai rules, then all hell will break loose. This film was supposed to be much darker originally, but still has some wonderful scares and a little gore.

Jack Frost (1996), directed by Michael Cooney, follows the notorious serial killer Jack Frost. Whilst being driven to his execution the truck carrying the murderer encounters a bizarre accident that transforms him into a mutant snowman which only makes him more dangerous. There's no limit to the world of macabre, not even during Christmas time.

There's even a Christmas short called *Treevenge*, directed by Hobo with a Shotgun's Jason Eisener; you can figure that one out for yourselves.



Destiny is in the hands of Men

As Amazon Studios' version of PHILIP K. DICK's seminal dystopian look at what might have been finally makes it to our screens, we look up to THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE...

After five years of false starts, the adaptation of celebrated sci-fi author Philip K. Dick's alternative history novel *The Man in the High Castle* has finally become a reality through online streaming service Amazon Prime. Eschewing the free-for-all of American TV's pilot season that sees opening episodes of dozens of potential shows pitched to network executives and a chosen few going into production, Amazon annually produces a number of its own pilots that are then released online, with viewing figures and audience response used to decide which ones make it to series. *The Man in the High Castle*'s pilot episode received such universal acclaim from viewers and critics alike that a full series of ten episodes was quickly commissioned.

Adapted by *The X-Files* veteran Frank Spotnitz and produced by Ridley Scott, the series takes place in an alternate reality where the Allies lost the Second World War.

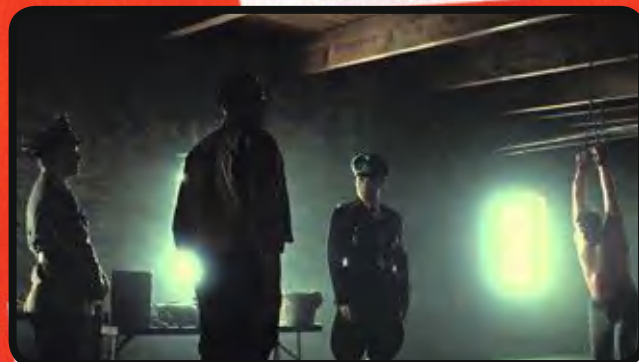
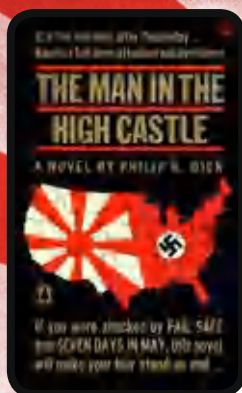
The hypothetical dominance of the Axis powers is a popular concept for alternative history, dating back to 1937 before World War II had even begun. Most novels, such as Len Deighton's *SS-GB* or Robert Harris' *Fatherland*, hypothesise what life in the UK and Europe could have been like under Nazi rule, but Dick's work is one of the few speculating how life on the other side of the Atlantic would have been affected by history taking such a drastic turn for the worse.

The series begins in 1962, fifteen years after the War ended in 1947. While the setting initially has hints of the rose-tinted 1960s Americana we are familiar with, the crushing despair of reality soon sets in. The US is a fractured nation, having been territorially severed down the Rocky Mountains and divided into three segments.

The Greater Nazi Reich comprises over half of the eastern side of the nation, the atmosphere of oppressive paranoia we

would most closely associate with Soviet East Berlin amplified over hundreds of thousands of square miles. The cultural dominance of the Nazi regime is now so prevalent that in the first episode's opening scene a cinema's pre-movie short of Gaud-bless-'murica national togetherness ends with a fluttering Stars and Stripes that replaces the 50 stars with a single pure white swastika, along with a friendly voiceover declaration of "Sieg heil". Within Nazi-riddled New York City hide resistance cells, hunted by the kind of ruthless and unfeeling trench coat-clad Gestapo you'll recognise from any WWII action movie.

In the west, the Japanese Pacific States have a distinctive Eastern influence, with signs in kanji lining the streets of San Francisco and Rising Sun logos periodically displayed in a variety of contexts. Japanese faces dominate the city and the white natives are often on good terms with them, and many people of both races consult the I Ching for daily divination to provide them with emotional strength and support. Although less outwardly tyrannical than the Nazi-occupied states, the authoritarian rule is instead more insidious, with the Kempeitai (a secret police force comparable to the Gestapo) operating





By Andrew Marshall

quietly in the shadows and silencing any dissidents with speed and efficiency.

Creating an uneasy buffer between the clashing ideologies is a neutral zone running down either side of the mountain range. On the surface, aside from signs appearing in two languages, the area appears largely free of direct influence from either superpower. However, the frayed and faded propaganda posters slowly peeling from the sides of buildings nevertheless speak paradoxically of an attitude of defeat. There is no continuing belief in the slogans of indefatigable resolve they impart, but rather a fading echo of what life must have once been like, before the prospect of any kind of victory or salvation was annihilated and exhausted resignation at the establishment of the New World Order slowly set in.

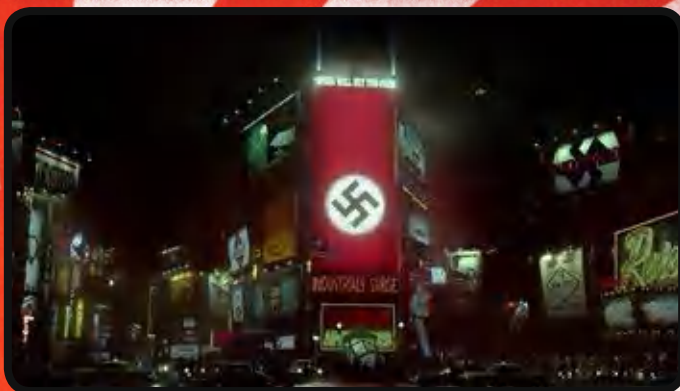
Any great power is always wary of others rising to challenge them, and having attained a joint global dominance, the Nazis and the Japanese now exist in a state of mutual unease and distrust. Instead of communism and capitalism, this world's cold war is between imperialism and megalomania. The waning health of Führer Adolf Hitler threatens to create a power vacuum within the Nazi high command, and a number of

potential successors are considering the use of nuclear weapons on the only power to now threaten them, creating a perpetual apprehension for the country's populace akin to the mutually assured destruction between the US and Russia of our own history.

Through this nightmarish dystopia wander a scattered group of characters, each surviving in different ways under the totalitarian rule. Juliana Crain (Alexa Davalos), begins as merely an ordinary resident of San Francisco, albeit a talented Aikido practitioner and friendly to the local Japanese. After a reunion as brief as it is bizarre, her sister is murdered by the Kempeitai, and Juliana's subsequent search for answers takes her on a journey across the fractured country. Female characters were always one of Dick's weaker points, and although Juliana was not entirely of the particular breed of irrational, duplicitous or screaming brunette that crops up in many of his stories, she was still largely characterised by how she was perceived by men. Here, with her prominence and importance established from the outset, she swiftly becomes the main viewpoint character for the audience and the one with whom they will most closely identify.

Joe Blake (Luke Kleintank), a young man with a dark secret, attempts to live up to his father's patriotic beliefs by joining an underground resistance cell in New York. Tasked with transporting a truck into the neutral zone, he soon meets up with Juliana and the pair continue their search for meaning together. Frank Frink (Rupert Evans) is Juliana's boyfriend, who lives in constant fear his Jewish ancestry will be uncovered and his life consequently becoming forfeit. He works in a factory creating fake historical relics passed off as the real thing to the influx of Japanese immigrants eager for their own piece of the idealised past, as the culture of the dying nation is slowly assimilated into those of the occupying forces. The state of the rest of the world at large is seen through the eyes of Nobusuke Tagomi (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa), a Japanese Trade Minister stationed in San Francisco who begins as a relatively minor presence, but whose prominence will rise as the series progresses.

At the centre of the story and tenuously linking its disparate strands is *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, a film reel of mysterious provenance that is one of a series said to have been created by an enigmatic figure known only as *The Man in the High Castle*. Depicting snippets





of news reports apparently covering the Allied victory of World War II – for the Americans a dream crushed a decade and a half previously – the film is an urban myth spoken of in hushed whispers, and merely being in possession of a copy is considered treason and punishable by summary execution. Enchanted by even a fictional account of such a thing being possible and searching for meaning to her sister's death, Juliana is drawn ever further into the mystery of its existence and the identity of its ethereal creator, along with how and why it was produced.

In Dick's original book, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy* was a novel whose plot described the Allied victory in a fashion differing from the one with which we are more familiar, and that ultimately culminated in a capitalist cold war between the United States and the British Empire. Its author Hawthorne Abendsen turned out to be surprisingly straightforward to track down and the truth behind the book quickly revealed, but TV is a visual medium and usually operates with the unfurling of mysteries at a gradual pace. As more of The Man's film reels are uncovered and greater detail of this fantasy world free of the Nazi scourge is imparted, we can likely

expect some discussion over what it truly represents; not exactly what the world might have been, but more what it *should* have been, creating in the minds of the characters a romanticised ideal not entirely dissimilar to the way that the Japanese purchasing the fake relics perceive the US and its people to have once been. In contrast, we see what they are now when Joe experiences ash falling like rain. A passing police officer nonchalantly informs him it comes from a nearby hospital burning cripples and the terminally ill, those who are a 'drag on the state', hammering home his earlier declaration of "We lost the war; now I can't even remember what we were fighting for". Changes in people's attitudes do not occur overnight, but by increments so imperceptible that after enough time one cannot even rationalise the disparity between what was once believed and what now is accepted as truth.

Dick's novels and short stories have been adapted into movies numerous times, producing a varied assortment ranging from the sublime (*Blade Runner*) to the ridiculous (*Paycheck*); from the gory (*Screamers*) to the subtle (*Impostor*). *The Man in the High Castle* marks the first time his work has been adapted

for long-form TV (unless you count the recently begun and now almost certain-to-be-cancelled *Minority Report* series, which you shouldn't), and is one that considerably differs from his innumerable worlds of advanced technology, sentient machines, alien cultures, and philosophical allegory. As such, for an author renowned for his mind-bending and occasionally trippy science fiction, social commentary of an invented nation emerging from an alternate history might seem like a complete departure for those otherwise familiar with his work. However, the novel contained a few implications that there may be more to this world than its surface detail makes immediately apparent, least of all the ultimate origin of *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*. Should the developing events take this as inspiration, then as the series progresses we can likely expect an emergence of existentialist themes and discourse into the nature of what is and is not truly real, as well as whether or not it's actually possible to even tell the difference?



THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE will be available on Amazon Prime from November 20th



Writing from The High Castle:

THE FICTIONALISING PHILOSOPHER

By Ed Fortune

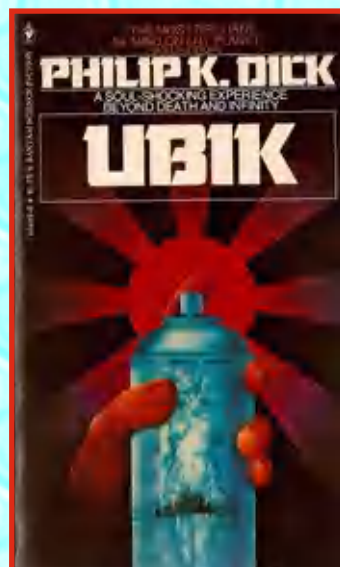


PHILIP K. DICK is generally regarded as one of the most diverse, interesting and productive science fiction authors of the twentieth century. His voice and vision have inspired the production of many well-known science fiction features and series such as **BLADE RUNNER**, **TOTAL RECALL**, **MINORITY REPORT**, and recently, **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**. Let's take a quick look at his firm and impressive body of work...

Even though many producers are keen to take Dick's work and turn them into movies, plenty of books and short stories have yet to be seen on screen. We take a look at some of the best...

UBIK

Set in a world with a Confederated United States in which psychic powers are all too common and people can easily travel to the moon. The plot revolves around Joe Chip, a technician who works in psychic security. It's his job to stop passers-by from using their mind-reading powers. Chip runs into a mysterious woman called Pat, who has the special ability to undo the past. Pat and Chip find themselves the targets of a scheme to change history itself, and they form an uneasy alliance to get to the bottom of things as reality itself falls apart around them. Though the shifting reality plot may make it tricky to film, it would make for an addictive TV series.



American author Philip Kindred Dick was born in 1928 along with his twin sister, who died shortly after the birth. This first and early tragedy would profoundly influence Dick's mindset later in his career. He graduated from Berkeley California High School in the same year as Ursula Le Guin. Though both would go on to become world class authors who would influence the genre world in long-lasting and memorable ways, they only discovered they went to the same school years after the fact. Dick developed his love of science fiction thanks to America's healthy trade in genre magazines during the '40s and '50s. At the age of 12, he got his hands on a copy of *Stirring Science Stories*, and began his life-long love affair with short yet strange tales.

Philip K. Dick is best known for his short story work. He wrote 121 shorts in his lifetime, many of which were

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch

It is the late 21st Century and mankind has filled every available space in the solar system. Earth has become so hot due to global warming that you need a special suit to go outside. Things are so bad that pretty much everyone takes reality warping drugs to make things easier. The drugs also allow people to share their experiences. This sharing has inspired a pseudo-religious cult. The multiple layers of reality (and the semi-religious theme) could make for a more philosophical take on *Inception*. It's a pretty dense novel with multiple ideas and storylines, so it could well be too much for movie audiences.



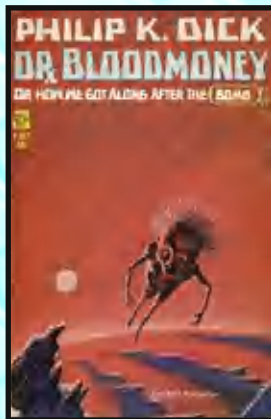
The Father-Thing

A cracking little short story about a boy who realises his father is, in fact, an alien replicant. His mission to uncover the details as to why this has happened explores on common themes from Dick's work; identity, family, and self. There's just enough there to make a movie, though we suspect any film version would be very different from the original. Still, it's a fan favourite and it would be interesting to see.



Dr Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along After The Bomb

Written in 1963 during the height of the cold war, **Dr Bloodmoney** is pretty weird. Dr Bruno Bluthgeld has screwed up the world thanks to his dodgy nuclear experiments, and the resulting fallout has called widespread mutation. The world is at war, conjoined mutant people roam the Earth and the poor Dr Bloodmoney is desperate to find his own sort of peace. Meanwhile, one of the few remaining astronauts is trapped in orbit around the planet and has become one of the most popular DJs ever. It's so packed with dark ideas that you could easily loot this book for several TV series' worth of science fiction adventures, and some might argue that's already happened.



published via short story magazines, with the first appearing in 1951 within the pages of *Planet Stories*. Four years later saw his debut published novel, *World of Chance*, appear (in the US, it was called *Solar Lottery*). The original book was heavily edited so that the publishers could squeeze another whole novel into the book. This was fairly common for 'pulp' works at the time. It would touch on the themes of identity, spirituality, exploration and oppression. These themes would follow Dick throughout his career. It was, however, Dick's first book; previous works had been written and were published much later in his career. His first two, *Gather Yourselves Together* and *Voices from the Street*, are literary works of fiction (rather than science fiction) that were published after his death in 1982.

In 1963, Dick won the Hugo Award for *The Man in the High Castle*. Despite strong

sales, a cult following and high praise from the critics, Dick had been pigeon-holed as a 'mere science fiction writer' at this point and was relatively poorly paid for a author of his fame and output. In total, forty-four novels featuring Dick's unique style have been published, although some of these are compilations of his letters and related correspondence.

His work is vast and comprehensive, but his themes are distinctive and recognisable. Much of his output deals with identity and self-realisation. For example, his better known works such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, *Impostor*, and *We Can Remember It for You Wholesale* all deal (on some level) with the main character's sense of self and understanding of reality. They also cover man's relationship with technology and the fear of (and inevitable surrender to) progression and change. The semi-autobiographical *A Scanner Darkly* is

more focused on Dick's relationship with drugs. The author used amphetamines, marijuana, mescaline, sodium pentothal, and LSD throughout his creative life. This damaged his pancreas and made him quite unwell in later years.

By 1974, the strongest drug Dick could cope with was vitamin C. Even then, this provided him with overwhelming useful and powerful ideas. Dick claimed that an overdose of vitamins caused him to see God. A chance encounter with a delivery woman wearing a Christian fish symbol caused the author to subscribe to multiple (and complex) Christian conspiracy theories. Up until this point, Dick had been firmly non-Christian. Spiritual, yes, but he had a profoundly humanist voice rather than a Christian one. This firm shift in tone led to the critically acclaimed and award-winning book *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. It is a dense book, in parts a

The Turning Wheel

It would be fascinating to see if *The Turning Wheel* ever made it to movie production. The book is filled with attacks on Scientology, the main villain is a Bard called Elron Hu (the title Bard is usually put *after* his name, so work it out...). Set in a post-apocalyptic world, technology allows everyone to see what their next reincarnation is. That means you can attempt to improve your fate in this life. The story revolves around the fate of a young man called Sung-Wu, who is doomed to come back as an insect due to past stupidity. His only hope is to break some more laws in hope of buying himself enough time to improve his karma. It's filled with clever dilemmas, and religious parody aside, is a classic example of Dick.



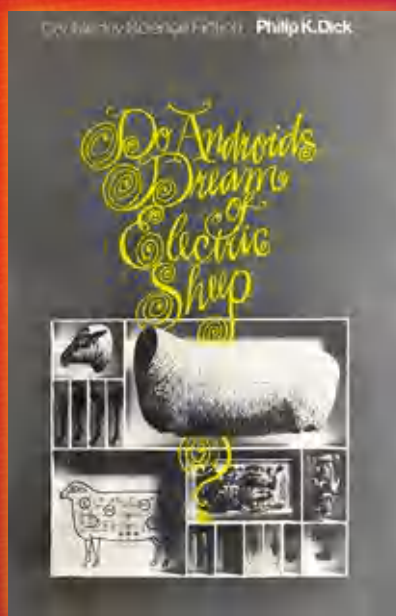
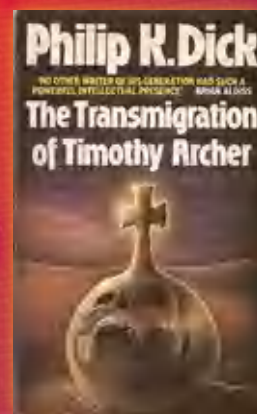
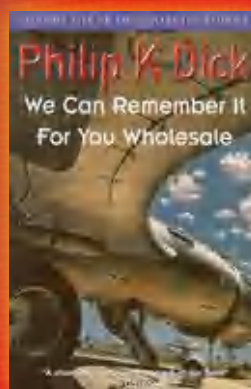
Orpheus with Clay Feet

This fun little short story about a man who decides to travel through time inspiring the greatest artists of all time is a nice little look at both the Bootstrap Paradox and the ego of the author. It makes great reading (and really is quite funny) but would almost certainly make a boring movie. Or even a clunky episode of *Doctor Who*, for that matter.



thriller about the meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but mostly a complex and involved philosophical novel. Light reading it is not. Dick's popularity is such that even this book has been considered as a possible movie; in the late '00s it was almost produced as an action adventure movie similar to *The Da Vinci Code*.

His last book, *The Owl in Daylight*, was never completed. Extracts exist, as does an 8000 page notebook crammed with ideas. Dick wanted it to be his version of *Finnegans Wake*, a book which is notoriously difficult to comprehend fully. Those who have read extracts of the book all agree that it is impenetrable and complex (and perhaps unfathomable). But in case you think it may be the only Philip K. Dick work that hasn't been considered for movie adaptation, that's not the case. The title is being used as the name of a proposed biopic of the man's life.



Philip K. Dick is very much the go-to name when it comes to turning powerful science fiction ideas into other forms of media. Here are some of our favourites.

Next

Dick's tense lecture on genocide may seem an odd choice to base a Nic Cage action adventure thriller on, but *Next* is exactly that. Anything that features Nicholas Cage as the next step in human evolution has got to be worth it, surely? Based on the novella *The Golden Man*, the movie version wisely doesn't paint its main star gold. Swapping the mutant-filled post-apocalyptic wasteland of the book for Las Vegas seems like a logical choice, all things considered. The only thing the two stories really have in common is that the main character can see two minutes into the future.



Paycheck

The central premise of the short story *Paycheck* is 'How much is a key to a bus locker worth? One day it's worth 25 cents, the next day thousands of dollars.' The main idea behind the movie, directed by John Woo and starring Ben Affleck, seems to be 'How can we make a sci-fi version of *Hardboiled* without anyone noticing'. In fairness, they share a central premise: A man wipes his memory to protect someone else's secrets. However, the original's ponderings and musings are gleefully replaced with high octane action.



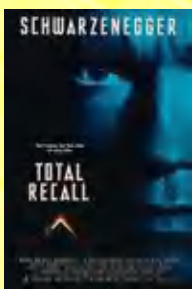
Minority Report

Mutants? Precognition? Reality Bending? Both the movie version and the original story are quintessential Dick. Tom Cruise turns his way through the movie version, which presents a simplified version of a rather long-winded tale of crime and punishment.



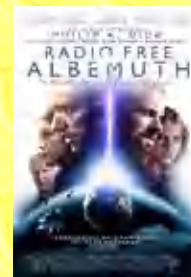
Total Recall

Based on the story *We Can Remember It for You Wholesale*, it's fair to say that both adaptations take a very straightforward story and go wild with it. The 1990 movie actually sticks to the spirit of Dick's work more than the later remake, mostly because it features Mars and a load of weird mutants. The character of Kuato is very much in the spirit of Dick's work. In the original story, Quaid's big secret is very different from either movie, but we doubt that anyone is ready for a third *Total Recall* movie.



Radio Free Albemuth

This adaptation has a bit of a complex origin. The novel was released posthumously, and was basically the original draft version of the book that would become known as *VALIS*. Both *VALIS* and *Radio Free Albemuth* deal with Dick's Gnostic Spiritualism. Set in a reality similar to our own, the film tells the tale of Nick Brady, a record store clerk who experiences visions and confides in a science fiction author (called Philip K. Dick). It's a weird mash of ideas and it's also pretty indulgent. It also features Alanis Morissette as a sort of messianic figure. The bad guys who persecute the visionaries are known as Friends of the American People, or FAP, which is inadvertently funny. It's a weird mess of a movie, but sort of charming because of this.



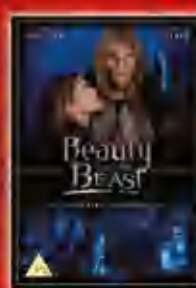
Blade Runner

Pretty much any fan can tell you that the movie *Blade Runner* is based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Apart from the central plot, which focuses on a bounty hunter tracking down renegade androids on a ruined Earth, the movie is different from the book in a few key ways. For a start, the latter is less violent. It's also more spiritual in tone and features a technologically created religion called Mercerism, which allows followers to experience the suffering of one man, William Mercer. This theme of sacrifice is replaced with one of self-contemplation and a blurring of the boundaries of identity, which captures the central ideas of the book without filling the screen with yet another one of Dick's wacky pseudo-religions.



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RETURN TO THE VILLAGE

Words: Tony Jones

STARBURST catches up with Big Finish's co-executive producer Nick Briggs to discuss the upcoming audio series of *THE PRISONER*...

STARBURST: We understand you've always been a great fan of *The Prisoner*. Can you tell us when your interest all started?

Nick Briggs: My interest started even before I'd seen it. My father had told me about it when I was young. He told me there had been this great series about a man 'trapped on an island' and chased by a 'big orange ball'. His hushed tones and enthusiastic telling made an impression on me, and when it finally popped up again in the late Saturday night schedules of ITV in 1977, while I was still bathing in the warm glow of having watched *Doctor Who* earlier in the evening, I pounced on it the way an archaeologist pounces upon a long lost relic. And, of course, the ball was not 'orange', only the 'alert' was! From the moment I watched the opening sequence, I was hooked!

How long have you wanted the chance to produce *The Prisoner* on audio with Big Finish, and how did it finally come about?

I had been mentioning it for years. Then, five or six years ago, when I started talking to ITV about possibly doing productions based on Gerry Anderson's shows — after I'd spoken to Gerry and he'd told me he'd love me to do this, but that I'd have to speak to ITV — I also mentioned *The Prisoner*. At that time, they indicated they would like me to do something based on the most recent iteration, featuring that chap from Mel Gibson's crucifixion movie. I wasn't keen on that, so I left the subject alone. Then, when, recently, I started talking about *Thunderbirds* again with ITV, and was, very reasonably, told that we couldn't do anything while there was a brand new series on the way, the people at ITV kindly said, 'But we'd love to work with you. Is there anything else you're interested in?' I said, 'Well, err... *The Prisoner*!' and we very quickly sorted out a licence. That was at the end of 2014, and I projected a January 2016 release and have worked on it throughout this year. Post-production and packaging design is now in its final stages.

Are the Big Finish stories a re-telling of the TV series, or a set of new stories shuffled in the gaps of the original?

This is a reimagining of the original that is very close in tone and style to the original. There are new twists and even a brand new, totally original episode. There are four episodes in the first box set. Three of them are adaptations of old episodes. *Arrival* becomes *Departure and Arrival*, then there are *The Schizoid Man* and *The Chimes of Big Ben*. The last two feature the central themes of the originals, but they unfold slightly differently. There are moments that come direct from the originals, then there are even lines you will recognise. This entire project is made out of unfettered love for McGoohan's superb original.

Part of the imagery of the TV show was the setting of *The Village*, the gardens and the wonderful Italian style buildings





of Portmeirion. How do you approach recapturing the setting?

That imagery is in the box set packaging and characters refer to it in the script. Their references are slightly more extravagant. Naturally, they had to cheat with the location, to make it seem bigger than it actually was. We don't have to worry about that on audio. We don't have to use stock footage for the mountains and cheat the geography. I think I've populated it with a bit more 1960s stuff. There's a reference to some plastic flowers and toy windmills, but we have the Green Dome and the Stone Boat, for example. The idea is for you to imagine it being in that classic setting.

And will Rover be coming back?

You bet Rover will be back! Rover is a 'she' this time. Why not? It's only a term of 'affection' from the powers at be, naturally. And there's something a tiny bit different about her. She makes the same noises, plus something even more unnerving. I won't spoil the surprise, though. See what you think.

How did Mark Elstob get the lead part of Number Six?

I was considering all sorts of options and had a number of meetings. I was thinking of famous people... But then I realised that I didn't want a well-known actor's 'persona' to get in the way of McGeehan's incredible creation. What I needed was someone who would give an entirely original performance that would be rooted in the role as created by McGeehan. I wrote it for Patrick McGeehan, so I wanted a strong leading man in the old-fashioned mould, for whom *The Prisoner* really meant something. I'd worked with Mark 20 years ago, thought he was superb and knew he was a *Doctor Who* fan. I chanced my arm that he would know *The Prisoner* too. I was right. And you know, his voice is not entirely unlike Patrick McGeehan's. He says he's channelling McGeehan, but actually, if you listen to his natural, speaking voice,

it's more or less there without even trying.

Mark tells a story that, at the last minute, I asked him to get closer to McGeehan than I'd originally asked him. What I actually meant was that I'd written the scripts with Patrick McGeehan in mind, so I wanted to be sure that he didn't decide to do something completely unlike Patrick McGeehan. Anyway, it's really great what Mark is doing. He is a great leading man. Really enthusiastic, brilliant actor and very welcoming and inclusive with everyone in the cast. Very rewarding to

work with. I hope I can work with him for years to come.

And do you think Patrick McGeehan was right to only produce one series, and what did you think of the ending? Will you be getting that surreal on audio?!

I don't think McGeehan had any choice, did he? I think he couldn't produce as many as Lew Grade wanted. Is that right? But the ending so enraged the viewing public, allegedly, that I imagine a further series wouldn't have been possible anyway. Well, not unless he'd promised to 'explain everything'. Yes, Number Six wakes up in the shower, to find that he dreamt *Once Upon A Time* and *Fall Out*. That would, of course, have been awful! Even though, of course, those two episodes have dream-like qualities, don't they? It's at that point that the narrative style of the series trips over the divide between adventure stories into the realm of allegory.

It's an interesting dilemma and perhaps a dichotomy that will be interesting to tackle. I've a few guiding ideas running through the episodes already, things that will be integral to the ideas currently coalescing about the possible ending to the audio series... These give me a guiding light to follow, but nothing is set in stone, and, of course, whether or not we continue depends on the reaction to this first volume. I'm optimistic and really keen to do more.

The first set of four stories of Big Finish's THE PRISONER will be released in January 2016.



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By Jack Bottomley

WHALE TALE



STARBURST looks ahead to RON HOWARD's upcoming sea bound tale of whales, sails and cannibalism...

Star Wars may well be dominating all the news this upcoming month, but that does not mean that your only viewing choices are limited to a galaxy far, far away. This December, one of literature's greatest tales is back on the big screen, in a manner of speaking. Director Ron Howard, off the back of other true story-to-film hits (in fact this is his sixth film based on true events) returns with a film that looks at the real-life story that inspired one of the greatest ever man vs. nature tales, *Moby Dick*. Naturally, not a straight adaptation of Herman Melville's everlasting novel, Howard's film *In the Heart of the Sea* tells the dramatic, dangerous and exhaustive true story of the sea-set tragedy that inspired a literary legend. So set the sails, stand at your posts and join us on blow hole lookout, as STARBURST looks at Ron Howard's *Moby Dick*... wait a minute, let us rephrase that...

At the time of release in 1851, *Moby Dick* (like many of the best works of the

written word, art, or film) was a commercial failure, and Melville died believing it to be the case, seeing only \$1,200 worth of earnings from the book in his lifetime. However, throughout the 20th century, particularly after the loss and destructive events of World War I, the book grew in all estimations and eventually became culturally significant, with the opening sentence "*Call me Ishmael*" becoming some of the most iconic opening words in any piece of literature. A tale of man challenged by the forces of nature, as well as the belief in God and issues of class in that era, it especially centered on the whale hunting profession (rightly relegated to history in many - though sadly not all - cultures today). *Moby Dick* was a landmark novel, a seabound allegory of religion, survival, and natural opposition that drew on the influences of poetry and romantic prose, but many may not know of the true story that prompted Melville's text.

Moby Dick was inspired by multiple elements of Melville's own life and

experiences. In his earlier years, Melville was a whaler - a reason *Moby Dick* has stretches just explaining the whaling process - and, in December 1840, signed on as part of the crew on the maiden voyage of a ship called Acushnet. Due to his experiences at sea, many of the characters in the book were influenced by real people. Going back to the narrative being told in *In the Heart of the Sea*, the basis of Melville's book was not only his experience aboard the Acushnet but two actual events. One was the dispatching of an albino sperm whale known as 'Mocha Dick' in the 1830s, but in relation to Howard's upcoming sea-set epic it is the other story that, pardon the pun, holds more water.

In 1820, an enraged sperm whale sank a whaling ship called the Essex: the events of the tragedy were chronicled by surviving first mate Owen Chase in his 1821 memoir *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex*. And it is here



that the basis is set for *In the Heart of the Sea's* oceanic survival story, that could well emerge as one of the best sea-set tales of survival against the odds ever to grace cinema. From *A Perfect Storm* to *Life of Pi*, perilous sea adventure literature and/or true stories have often enjoyed enormous success on the big screen, and we could well expect the same here. However, what is the story? Surely Ron Howard doesn't need 121 minutes just to tell us a ship was sunk by a majorly pissed off big whale? Well no, there is slightly more to this story than meets the eye, because while Melville's story focused on the event, Howard's film digs into the human condition by assessing the aftermath of a disaster.

In the Heart of the Sea's screenplay is written by Charles Leavitt (*Blood Diamond*), who also co-wrote the story with the aid of *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* scribes Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver. The plot sees the Essex on a whaling voyage; led by Captain George Pollard Jr. (Benjamin Walker), the crew consists of first mate Owen Chase (Chris Hemsworth), second mate Matthew Joy (Cillian Murphy) and Cabin Boy Thomas Nickerson (Tom Holland). This voyage is one sailed by many vessels, however on this occasion the crew of the

Essex encounter an unexpected force of nature in a titanic (if that's not a word, it should be!) sized sperm whale that attacks with vengeful ferocity sinking the ship and splitting the crew. Stranded at sea thousands of miles from home, the crew strive to survive as they head for South America. However, the journey is rife with dangers; from stormy seas and starvation to their own mortality and desperation. One might call this a heroic tale of fighting the odds - well it does star Thor and Spider-Man - but Ron Howard's film is one that could hit a lot harder than most.

Dining on 500-600 calories a day in preparation for their roles, the cast were certainly put through their paces to capture the sense of desperation in this story. Judging by the trailers, the film will also be powered by a romantic element as Chase attempts to get home and keep a promise made to his pregnant wife Peggy (Charlotte Riley). This certainly fuels the fires of the film's Oscar aspirations, as its release was moved closer towards awards season. Another interesting aspect is that the cast is fleshed out by Brendan Gleeson playing an older Thomas Nickerson and Ben Whishaw, who is appearing as Herman Melville himself, suggesting a split approach to the story between past

and, well, less past. The film has made no bones about the story being part of the inspiration for *Moby Dick*, so this direction is hardly surprising, but with a cast of this caliber Howard certainly has a sturdy hull to his cinematic sailing boat.

However, despite the cannibalistic aspects of the story (well they were





desperate for food, people!) and the possible ideologies of faith, mortality and nature, there is a real vibe here of a wave-riding epic. The CGI-assisted imagery and sail-crunching action is heavily evident in the promotional material. *In the Heart of the Sea* may have depth, but Howard is clearly not cutting back on the set pieces either. After all, at heart, much like *Moby Dick*, this is a tale of Mother Nature challenging man for daring to defy and confront her. Even after the whale strikes, the very struggles the crew are bound to face (disease, storms, starvation) are spurred on by nature. Much of the film was shot - like John Huston's famed adaptation of *Moby Dick* - in the Canary Islands, so this gives an enormous chance that this journey will not only be a physical experience but a visual one, especially with Anthony Dod Mantle (*Slumdog Millionaire*, *28 Days Later*, *Dredd*) on cinematography duties.

As films like *Gravity*, *The Martian*, and *127 Hours* have recently shown, audiences love a good story of survival and the more desperate in nature, the better. Plus these aforementioned films also stand as darn good examples of big name directors stepping into the genre, with splendid results. Although this is not Ron Howard's first tale of men being stranded, challenged and confronted with a potentially hopeless situation - let us not forget his awards-showered space-set tale *Apollo 13*. Which was similarly blessed with a talented cast and a stirring factual core, so

with this in mind, could *In the Heart of the Sea* be another case of Howard breathing big screen magic into a factual fable? There are certainly similarities in this film with Howard's other work - *Apollo 13*'s stranded trappings, *Frost/Nixon*'s character-based plot, and *Rush*'s energetic thrills; combined with one bloody big whale.

So while the no doubt record-breaking numbers climb for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, there are alternative epics coming to cinema this Christmas. Epics that may not be a long, long time ago (more a while ago in this case) and certainly didn't take place in a galaxy far, far away. Epics that don't need space, blasters and aliens, only the ultimate binary oppositions of man and nature. We will all be watching *Star Wars* but this

Christmas why not also attempt to see what Ron Howard brings to the table in this tale of opposition, desperation and determination? True, cannibal thoughts, angry mammals, and thinning Asgardians are not the best recipe for a festive hit, but come awards season, chances are *In the Heart of the Sea* could be making a splash. If the director's sterling work bringing true stories to life (see *A Beautiful Mind*) in the past are anything to go by, *In the Heart of the Sea* could be another hit for Howard. So as Falcons fly and bells jingle this December, those looking for an alternative may like to dive into the heart of the sea...



***IN THE HEART OF THE SEA* sails into UK cinemas on December 26th.**



REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY - PART 2

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: FRANCIS LAWRENCE / SCREENPLAY: DANNY STRONG, PETER CRAIG / STARRING: NATALIE DORMER, JENNIFER LAWRENCE, ELIZABETH BANKS, JULIANNE MOORE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2 may be the final part of a bestselling young adult trilogy, but this is a film inspired by an author who isn't going to let spectacular action drown out a serious political message. While Mockingjay Part 1 cast a suspicious eye over propaganda as a tool to entice people in to war, Mockingjay Part 2 takes a sharpened scalpel to the tactics and ethics of fighting an actual war.

Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) is virtually voiceless as the film opens, still bruised from the brainwashed Peeta's (Josh Hutcherson) chokehold at the end of the previous film. District 13's President Coin (Julianne Moore) remains busy pulling the strings behind the scenes while Katniss is wheeled out to the districts to continue her role as a symbol of the revolution. Though Coin is increasingly keen to keep the Mockingjay on the sidelines, it isn't long before two-time arena survivor turned freedom fighter Katniss decides to take the battle right to President Snow's door, by leading a small group through the Capitol on

a suicidal assassination mission.

It sounds exciting, and anyone disappointed that Mockingjay Part 1 was too slow, or too stuffed with filler, will probably be pleased with the amount of action in Part 2. Even so, it takes a while to get going, with Gwendoline Christie (Game of Thrones' Brienne) only appearing in a single scene, but this scene being a notably thoughtful and interesting discussion of the rights and wrongs of killing innocent people during war. It is one moment of many in Mockingjay that sends out some mixed messages, but author Suzanne Collins' original caution of authority and anti-war stance eventually emerge unscathed.

Key here is one of the most emotive moments in the entire trilogy that comes close to the end of this final film. Though director Francis Lawrence has handled most of the second and third books brilliantly, he slightly fumbles one of the biggest and most tragic deaths of the series, robbing it of much of its power. His

star Jennifer Lawrence makes up for this in one of the very last scenes when her anger finally boils to the surface, but it is a shame the moment itself failed to pack a bigger punch.

In between its sterile, bland opening in District 13 and the destroyed remnants of other districts, and the ending that just gets darker and darker by the minute, Mockingjay 2 does find time for some typical blockbuster action. President Snow has set traps all over the Capitol, making it basically another arena for those complaining that this is another Hunger Games film with no actual Hunger Games in it! The procession of deaths that fill this second half are far too bloodless, and some of the traps seem ludicrously set up to allow easy escape, but there is at least one standout scene when Katniss finally gets to kick serious ass as Snow's monstrous mutts are unleashed on the group.

Collins' final book felt extremely rushed so the decision to split Mockingjay into Parts 1 and 2 allows the story to progress slightly more naturally. It's still far too easy for Katniss to get through the Capitol, but Francis Lawrence makes the most of the time spent in the dark tunnels below the city. Peeta's flip-flopping from enemy to ally and back again grows vaguely tiresome, though Josh Hutcherson does his best with a script that constantly gets him to explain how he is feeling, rather than fully showing it.

Most of the problems with Mockingjay Part 2 are there in the book it is adapted from. Collins seemed to care a little less about the logic of the story and more about the message behind it by this point. Too many characters are introduced and dispatched as it moves towards the climax. Admirably, it feels far too bleak to be a major blockbuster. The cost of war is never forgotten, even in a tacked on 'happy' ending final scene that could easily have been left on the cutting room floor.

Mockingjay Part 2 is a fittingly dark end to the Hunger Games franchise, not as exciting perhaps as Catching Fire, but more politically charged. It's not the kind of film that families will be queuing up to see again and again, but it is a rare blockbuster that might just inspire young people to participate in politics and maybe even fight for a better and fairer future for themselves.

PETE TURNER

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ ★★ 8

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ ★★ 8

STARBURST



SPECTRE

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: SAM MENDES / SCREENPLAY: NEIL PURVIS, ROBERT WADE, JOHN LOGAN, JEZ BUTTERWORTH / STARRING: DANIEL CRAIG, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, LÉA SEYDOUX, BEN WHISHAW, NAOMIE HARRIS, DAVE BAUTISTA, MONICA BELLUCCI, RALPH FIENNES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

SPECTRE is an integrated remake of Thunderball and You Only Live Twice starring the core cast of the Daniel Craig era, and providing a final resolution for his saga. Sounds good, doesn't it?

SPECTRE does start very well indeed, jumping straight into Bond just doing what he does without any emotional trauma getting in the way for a change. This time, he's on the trail of terrorists at the Mexican Day of the Dead festival, and after a very lengthy, exciting, and very public chase sequence, Bond heads home with the MacGuffin that kicks off his quest for some familiar bad guys – an organisation that we haven't properly seen since Connery hung up his wig.

If those pre-credits left you exhausted, don't worry, as Sam Smith then gives you an excuse to nod off for a three minute power nap. Although, to be fair, his song Writing's on the Wall is more palatable with the Daniel Kleinman title imagery (if you can get your head around a messianic Daniel Craig stripped to the waist, and being worshipped by hot ladies - it's good work if you can get it!). Sadly yet again, we have different talents producing the theme song and soundtrack. Long gone are the days when the theme song mattered and would reoccur within the movie itself, except for a carefully agreed token few bars.

SPECTRE sees the core cast from Skyfall all present and on top form. Naomie is again great as the fun but strictly business, modern day Money Penny. Ralph Fiennes excels as the new M; an M who is not afraid to get his hands dirty whilst similarly delivering the best comedy moment in the film. However, the real star (other than Craig) is Ben Whishaw as Q. With SPECTRE, he makes the role his own and manages to step away from the shadow of Desmond Llewelyn, whilst giving us an extremely likeable Q that a modern audience will soon find irreplaceable. His scenes really help to make this feel like a modern Bond movie, and not just some dreary Bourne clone. The return of SPECTRE as the main nemesis was clearly also

intended to help in this regard. Needless to say, Craig is on top form throughout a movie that has an onerous mission of its own – to be as well received as Skyfall!

With Skyfall being the runaway box office hit it was, Bond was once again popular with the mainstream moviegoing public, (not just Bond aficionados), and Craig is currently at the peak of his popularity. So with the legal difficulties that had prevented these characters from appearing since the early '70s having been recently resolved, many were ecstatic at the return of SPECTRE, and the possibility of Ernst Stavro Blofeld being somewhere in the mix. The casting of Christoph Waltz as the main villain also boded well, but although his character name of Franz Oberhauser seemed to quash him being Blofeld, many were left wondering whether this was a similar smokescreen to the one that cloaked the appearance of Khan in Star Trek Into Darkness. This is indeed resolved, but not in a way that dedicated fans are likely to appreciate. Dave Bautista also furthers the retro vibe by playing a very Jaws-lite henchman, and his Mr Hinx is a credible physical challenge to Craig's Bond when fisticuffs ensue. Physicality has been a hallmark of this era, and this is wisely carried over into the set pieces; the emphasis is still kept on stuntwork and practical effects with a bare minimum of CG effects work. This helps to cement that Bond *feel* that was clearly sought. In fact, there are many *Bond moments* throughout, and this trip back into its earlier mythology does provide regular jolts of nostalgia, although we had already seen the best of this in the trailers. The shadowy SPECTRE meeting is the high point of the film when it comes to channelling the best of the '60s Bond movies. Unfortunately, this is where the good news seems to run dry.

The story itself is flimsy and gossamer thin, merely acting as a loose framework to provide an ending to the previous three instalments. This never comes across as anything other than forced, especially with regards to Skyfall; there had been literally

no foreshadowing of this unconvincing connection. Even the title sequence gets in on the act, and unlike the Lazenby handover in On Her Majesty's Secret Service, the flashback imagery serves no real purpose. Despite this urgency to resolve everything neatly, it is handled with little or no explanation, which renders the initial build-up in the first half rather pointless. What actually is SPECTRE? Were Quantum part of SPECTRE (bad guys fronting for slightly worse bad guys)? And most importantly, is SPECTRE even an acronym anymore? No answers are to be found here. It's all atmospheric intrigue with no payoff.

Similarly gossamer thin is the treatment of the two leading ladies, Monica Bellucci and Léa Seydoux. Bellucci is in, bedded, and gone within a few short scenes, and Seydoux just does not cut it as Mr White's daughter Dr. Madeleine Swann (although it was great to see Jesper Christensen again). Unlike the credible romance that blossomed between Bond and Vesper in Casino Royale, you simply get no insight as to how Bond could ever fall for this woman, or make any sacrifice to be with her.

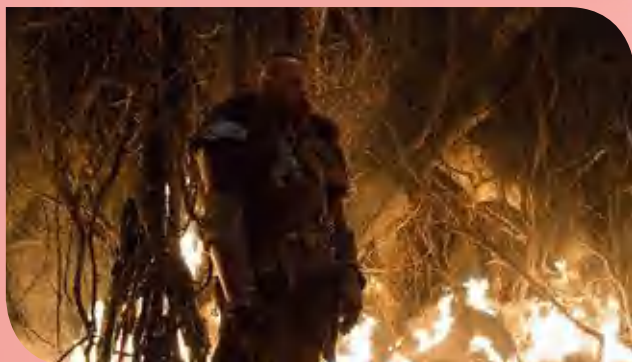
As an action movie, SPECTRE does zip along initially until the halfway mark when the mythology and the intentional nostalgia trip pull on the handbrake. What you are left with may well be of interest to seasoned Bond fans, but the average moviegoer would probably have preferred more of the easier-to-follow antics of Skyfall than paying visits to supervillain lairs that resemble holistic retreats. Therein lays the inherent weakness of SPECTRE. It is too self-indulgent (and at two and a half hours, VERY long) for a mainstream audience, yet also takes liberties that Bond fans will probably balk at. Those fans are likely to hate the ending, and the key reveal that is not only a shocking misjudgement by the filmmakers (bearing in mind their efforts to distance themselves from Bond clichés and parodies), but is delivered as such weak sauce that it's almost pointless. This effort to inflict the *closed universe* approach (where everything and everyone is connected) upon the Bond franchise leads to an awful culmination. The reason revealed for everything that has happened in Bond's life since Casino Royale is downright laughable, and actually harms the credibility of the previous three movies.

Out of Daniel Craig's tenure, Casino Royale remains the most true to the Bond legacy, whilst still managing to carve out a new approach. Whereas SPECTRE feels the most like a traditional Bond movie, is occasionally awesome to watch, but simply doesn't feel authentic, and is further sabotaged by a needless, silly, and damaging backstory. Which is a shame, because with this amount of zeitgeist, so much more could have been achieved here than making you want to finally pony up and buy those Connery Bonds on Blu-ray.

JORDAN ROYCE

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 9

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 7



THE LAST WITCH HUNTER

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: BRECK EISNER / SCREENPLAY: CORY GOODMAN, MATT SAZAMA, BURK SHARPLESS / STARRING: VIN DIESEL, ELIJAH WOOD, ROSE LESLIE, MICHAEL CAINE, JOSEPH GILGUN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Eye of newt! Toe of frog! Here's a hideous horror-lite concoction starring Vin Diesel that is right up there with the likes of the hapless Pixels as a solid gold contender for the title of Worst Movie of 2015. But where Pixels was just irredeemably, insultingly appalling, Witch Hunter is a bore pretty much from start to finish – and trust us, the finish takes a long time coming for a film which runs for just 100 minutes. Lunkhead Vin plays

Kaulder, a 13th century warrior gifted the curse of immortality after a final tumultuous battle with the evil Witch-Queen in her snowy Middle Ages domain. Flash-forward to the 21st century where Kaulder is fighting evil magic and witches and whizzy supernatural things with the help of the latest in a long line of wise old buffers called Dolans. This 36th incarnation is played by Michael Caine – presumably

this was one of those pocket-money-for-the-holidays jobs – who is swiftly dispatched and replaced by Elijah Wood in a career move he's sure to come to regret. There's also a 'dreamwalker' witch mooching about – she's played by Rose Leslie from Game of Thrones – and one of the baddies looks and sounds like Brian Blessed but is actually Ólafur Darri Ólafsson (which we bet is a bugger to say after a few pints of witches' brew). Turns out that the Witch-Queen wasn't finished off in Olden Days – her evil, beatin' heart has survived and plans are afoot to revive her whereupon she'll visit a new Black Death (she was responsible for the 14th century plague, apparently – who knew?) upon humanity in the 21st century. Gasp!

This is horribly bland, cartoonish stuff which bounces from one festival of CGI to another; if the pace drops and things get too talky, no problem – open up another hole in the ground or a portal to somewhere and hurl out a plague of insects of locusts or blazing white light. It's soulless, bloodless

and lifeless, absolutely unscary even for the tiniest child (we'd imagine) and it tries to compensate for its lack of interesting characters and incident by banging on about dreamwalkers and runes and plague trees but without even a pointy hat in sight to at least provide the odd laugh. There is some unintentional humour, though, from some fabulously deathless dialogue. At one point, Vin is reminiscing about how he no longer kills witches but "took all the most powerful witches in the world and put them in one place" to which Michael Caine deadpans "The witch-prison." You couldn't make it up but apparently someone did and then wrote it down.

This is clearly designed to kick off an exciting new supernatural franchise. But you don't have to cast a spell or even sacrifice a goat to realise that this one's dead in the water and that we've almost certainly seen the last of The Last Witch Hunter.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ++++++ 5

ACTUAL +++ 2



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: THE GHOST DIMENSION

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: GREGORY PLOTKIN / SCREENPLAY: JASON HARRY PAGAN, ANDREW DEUTSCHMAN, ADAM ROBITEL, GAVIN HEFFERNAN / STARRING: CHRIS J. MURRAY, BRIT SHAW / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The fact that the Paranormal Activity franchise – a string of micro-budget found footage style bang-scream-bang shockers – has spooked up nearly a billion dollars at the worldwide box office since Oren Peli's first \$18,000-budget effort scared audiences witless in 2007 is more terrifying than anything presented in this samey, predictable, logic-defying final entry in the series.

Peli's first movie was something genuinely hair-

raising and original (the found footage gimmick, although nothing new even then, hadn't yet been ground into the creative dust), a simple tale of two young people in a house terrorised by... well, paranormal activity of the slightly more subtle kind. But as the series has worn on, its makers have become increasingly desperate in their attempts to unnerve the audience and that original delicacy of touch was thrown out of the window fairly early on

as subsequent movies got more and more silly and less and less scary. A complex mythology and backstory was built up too; mercifully, for those who have been paying attention and taking notes, there is some pay-off in this much-delayed wrap-up (it was originally slated for release as long ago as October 2013) with some loose ends tied up and explanations (of a sort) finally offered.

We're on familiar PA territory here. Likeable young family move into a rented house to celebrate Christmas 2013. Their eight-year-old kid starts behaving strangely so – using the increasingly-creaky security-cameras-all-over-the-house gimmick – they keep watch over her and discover strange wispy malevolent shapes manifesting themselves (leading to the inevitable tide of bangs and crashes around the house) until things escalate, a blazing doorway opens in the girl's bedroom wall and a gruesome demonic figure starts to make its presence felt.

This is all well and good but this is obviously a franchise which is now all out of ideas even as it tries to bring its story to a

final end. The filming-on-a-camcorder conceit comes and goes on a whim and then there's the idiocy of people in a darkened house running around screaming and waving torches when they could easily switch all the lights on – have these people never seen a horror film? Ghost Dimension tries every trick in the book – there's some leery looming and rather unexceptional 3D – but the whole story has thrown its original potential and tenuous plausibility away and all that's left are CGI spooks and demons appearing and strangling or throwing people around.

Although Ghost Dimension offers the series' fans some sort of closure, it's all a bit limp and lame and can't offer up even the mildest of scares. There's no denying that the Paranormal Activity franchise has been a huge modern horror phenomenon but enough's enough now and it's time to put the cheap camcorders away. Other filmmakers take note.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ++++++ 5

ACTUAL +++ 4



CRIMSON PEAK

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: GUILLERMO DEL TORO / SCREENPLAY: GUILLERMO DEL TORO, MATTHEW ROBBINS / STARRING: MIA WASIKOWSKA, JESSICA CHASTAIN, TOM HIDDLESTON, CHARLIE HUNNAM / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Few would disagree that *Pacific Rim*, Guillermo del Toro's kinetic 2013 homage to the kaiju genre, didn't really seem a comfortable fit with the director's more stylised, warped, angular sensibilities. Happily he – and his audience – are back on firmer ground in *Crimson Peak*, a gorgeous, lavish Gothic thriller which is part Hammer horror (although arguably it's not really a horror movie at all), part classic Roger Corman and, in the end, absolutely Guillermo del Toro. It's *not*, however, *classic* del Toro – it's no *Pan's Labyrinth* or *Devil's Backbone* – but it's probably close enough to reassure fans worried that their hero might be abandoning the weird and succumbing to the allure of the mainstream.

Set somewhere in the Victorian era, the film tells of budding American writer Edith Cushing (Mia Wasikowska), romanced by the plausible, if slightly shabby, English baronet Sir Thomas Sharpe (Tom Hiddleston), in America to schmooze her rich father into helping finance his claypit mining operations. Circumstances lead Edith, who has fallen for Thomas's charms and married him, to move to his remote family home in cold, windswept Northern England. This is the crumbling, forbidding Allerdale Hall – a dump by any other name – and Edith tries to adapt to married life in a house sinking into the red clay deposits on which it's built and which intermittently ooze up between the floorboards. Then there's Thomas's brooding sister Lucille (Jessica Chastain) and the little matter of the skeletal wraith-like spectres appearing

out of nowhere warning Edith to beware *Crimson Peak* – the house's nickname.

This is very much del Toro indulging his love of big, blousy Gothic ghost/haunted house stories. He brings his very specific visual aesthetic to a lurid story, populating it with characters straight out of the cheapest *Penny Dreadful* and dropping them into a stunningly designed nightmare world full of creaking metal elevators, clanging pipes and snow and leaves gusting in through the house's gaping roof. It's the production design and the extraordinary attention to detail in both the sets and the costumes which will most impress about *Crimson Peak*, because despite its twists and turns and occasional jolts and sublime, awkward violence, the story itself has little of the subtlety and nuance of del Toro's more memorable movies; here he's out not to scare or unsettle us but to tell us a story about lies and duplicity and ambition with a few generic ghosts thrown in for good measure.

But that's not to say it isn't hugely entertaining. Hiddleston, stepping out of *Loki's* shadow, is a strong and commanding leading man, but the film really belongs to Jessica Chastain in a role quite literally a million miles or more away from her turn as the guilt-ridden commander of the *Hermes II* in last month's *The Martian*. Here she's almost unrecognisable and if there's any hair-raising to be done by *Crimson Peak*, Chastain's the one to do it with her cold, callous malevolence.

Crimson Peak is in many ways del Toro on 'auto pilot' but when his destination is so richly drawn and magnificently atmospheric,

we're inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt in perhaps aiming a little lower than the heights we know, from past experience, he's easily able to reach. A visual treat allied to a gripping, if hardly ground-breaking story, *Crimson Peak* is a fun, shivery thrill but ultimately likely to fall short of the classic return-to-form status we might have been expecting or hoping for.

PAUL MOUNT

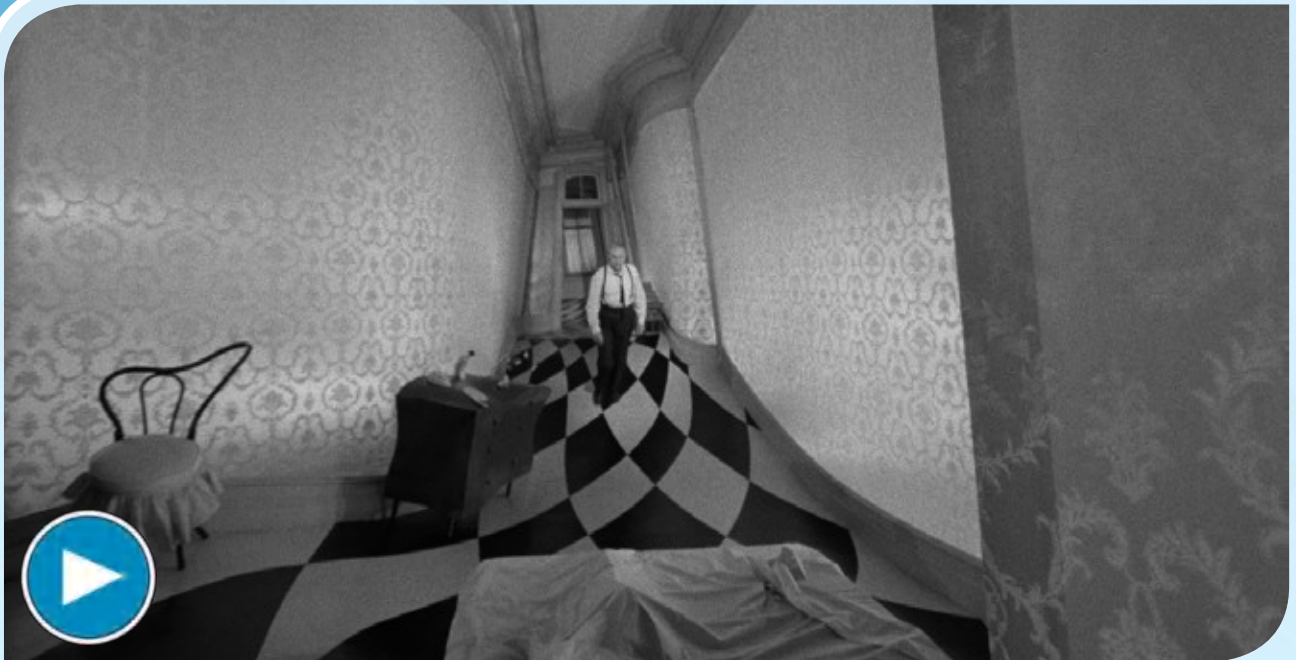
EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 9

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 8



THE LATEST HOME
VIDEO RELEASES
REVIEWED & RATED

REVIEWS



SECONDS (1966)

DUAL BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JOHN FRANKENHEIMER / SCREENPLAY: LEWIS JOHN CARLINO / STARRING: ROCK HUDSON, SALOME JENS, JOHN RANDOLPH, JEFF COREY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Beautifully remastered for the Masters of Cinema Series, John Frankenheimer's 1966 sci-fi thriller masterpiece, *Seconds*, is a pure cinematic delight for fans of classic escapist fantasy. Starring Rock Hudson, *Seconds* is based around the concept of eternal youth and yearning for the dream life.

Based on the novel of the same name, *Seconds* is Frankenheimer's lesser known work in his impressive filmography. Dismissed by audiences upon its initial release, *Seconds* can now be appreciated in stunning HD by a whole new audience as it showcases the disorientating cinematography of the talented and influential James Wong How.

Arthur Hamilton's (John Randolph) life is unfulfilling and unremarkable. Middle-aged and working as a broker, Arthur is looking for a new lease on life. After a suspicious offer from an old deceased friend, Arthur involves himself in life changing surgery. Courtesy of The Company, Arthur is provided with a new identity without any prior commitments. Arthur is a new man in the form of 'Tony' Wilson, played by Rock Hudson in the finest performance of his career.

Seconds has a truly unique concept, which plays well with everyone's fear of

growing old. Frankenheimer utilises this fear in the movie whilst injecting that sense of paranoia that he is renowned for. From the unsettling Saul Bass intro to the horrifying ending, *Seconds* is a masterclass in '60s sci-fi.

This version of the film depicts the infamous wine tasting celebration in all of its unabashed glory by showcasing full frontal nudity and some truly jarring camerawork. Tony Wilson is thrown headfirst into a hedonistic hippie jamboree by Nora (Salome Jens), which manages to capture a real feeling of uneasiness. This is partly due to Frankenheimer's direction and Howe's remarkable cinematography throughout, which is accomplished with the use of fish-eye lens, hand-held shots and strong chiaroscuro.

Rock Hudson's portrayal of Tony Wilson is truly magnificent as he manages to capture the mannerisms of John Randolph's Arthur Hamilton perfectly. He allows the audience to believe that these two people are the same, and portrays his inner turmoil with some captivating acting.

To achieve Arthur Hamilton's transformation, Frankenheimer openly states in the added commentary that

real rhinoplasty surgery was filmed for the procedure, which resulted in one cameraman fainting on set. Frankenheimer shortly took over, which is a true testament to the production of *Seconds*.

Seconds has been painstakingly remastered to remove all scratches and debris from the original film and the quality of the picture is simply stunning. The smallest facial details can be noticed, whereas the clarity of much larger shots still looks impressive. It is one of the finest presentations of '60s cinema. Extras include a twenty-minute analysis from Kim Newman, separate commentary by John Frankenheimer and Adrian Martin, and the original theatrical trailer.

Perhaps Frankenheimer's *Seconds* was too high-concept for audiences of the 60s, but this sci-fi thriller can now be recognised for its sheer brilliance. It's an extraordinary experience, and a definitive piece of '60s cult sci-fi. Not to be missed.

Extras: Commentary from John Frankenheimer / Analysis from Kim Newman / Trailer

MATT WELLS

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

STARBURST

DVD & BLU-RAY



SLEEPY HOLLOW: SEASON 2

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: TOM MISON, NICOLE BEHARIE, ORLANDO JONES, KATIA WINTER, LYNDIE GREENWOOD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For those not in the know, *Sleepy Hollow* is a series which follows in the spirit of others such as *Grimm* and *Warehouse 13*, putting a supernatural spin on the police procedural drama. With a twist on the classic legend, Ichabod Crane (Tom Mison) is a decorated hero of the American Revolution who,

having been awoken after over 200 years, teams up with Abby Mills (Nicole Beharie) to take down the classic Headless Horseman amongst other supernatural baddies.

Season 2 begins with the resolution of Season 1's cliffhanger in which Crane has been buried alive by his evil son, Henry Parish (John

Noble) and Mills is trapped in purgatory; nothing that our two heroes can't handle! However... the plot has only just begun to thicken in the chess-like game being played between father and son. Amidst the pawns are Crane's wife, Katrina (Katia Winter), who is now at the mercy of the Headless Horseman, and Mills' former boss Captain Irving (Orlando Jones) who is now in the care of a psychiatric ward. But as the game intensifies, does that allow the elusive demon Moloch closer to the real world?

Sleepy Hollow is at best a real treat or, at worst, a really guilty pleasure; there's very little to not like about it! As a show, it benefits from excellent main casting: Tom Mison suits the archaic Crane adjusting to modern life with sometimes ticklish results; meanwhile, Nicole Beharie offers all of the humour, threat and tragedy that makes for an excellent protagonist. At the villainous

end of the scale, *Sleepy Hollow* also has the wonderful John Noble as Henry Parish, wonderfully malevolent and sophisticated enough to be a real adversary for Crane and Mills. It's the wonderful casting and performances such as these that (when necessary) saves the episodes from being a tad predictable.

Away from the series, the special features of *Sleepy Hollow* are the standard fare: gag reels, episode commentaries by cast and crew, and deleted scenes as well as some interesting feature programmes about the second series itself and the monsters which feature throughout.

Overall, this second series Blu-ray is a real treat for established fans and its mostly excellent storytelling and always excellent cast is enough to draw in new fans!

NICK BLACKSHAW

★★★★★★★★★ 8



OUTLANDER: SEASON 1

BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / CREATOR: RONALD D. MOORE / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: CAITRIONA BALFE, SAM HEUGHAN, TOBIAS MENZIES, DUNCAN LACROIX / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Based on Diana Gabaldon's best-selling book series, *Outlander* follows Claire Randall, a married combat nurse who, in 1946, is mysteriously swept back in time to Scotland 1743 and immediately thrown into a life-threatening and dangerous world. When, after being forced by circumstantial fate, she is made to marry Jamie Fraser, an outlawed Highlander, she finds herself falling in love and torn by her loyalties to two men in different vastly different time periods. Along her journey, Claire tries to reconcile her modern mindset with the 18th century world, whilst dealing with threats from the ruthless Redcoats led by monstrous Captain Jack Randall (her future husband's

earliest ancestor), volatile clan politics and a brutal witch hunt – and ultimately discovering a fate worse than death as she struggles to save Jamie's heart, as well as his soul.

When described on paper, you would start to question whether this would make compelling TV drama, but "Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ" (as Claire would say), they pulled it off with style. This is basically an adventure/romantic/semi-historical drama that initially starts off at a solid pace and continues in that pace with flying colours without ever becoming boring or stale, as often happens with TV shows. This is a show that's constantly evolving, adapting, and

changing with each episode, and even though there are a few moments when the drama tends to jump back and forth between 1743 and 1946, the narrative still continues strongly till the very end of the season. Many different characters are introduced here and there, yet you can easily become attached to these characters as the show benefits greatly in providing strong characterisation with equally strong character development.

One incredibly strong factor this show has in spades is its casting. Caitriona Balfe is pretty much in near every single damn scene of the entire series, and never once does she falter. Balfe is pretty much the centre of the show, and throughout she magnificently conveys the compassion, integrity, stubbornness and vulnerability the character of Claire requires, and as a result, her beautifully complex performance made us invested in her and the journey she's going through. The same can also be said for Sam Heughan, who perfectly captures Jamie's courageousness, earnestness, and ferocity, plus his chemistry with Balfe is consistently electrifying and the show's key success. Tobias Menzies portrays his dual roles splendidly and does an amazing job of making the nihilistic Captain Jack Randall a truly

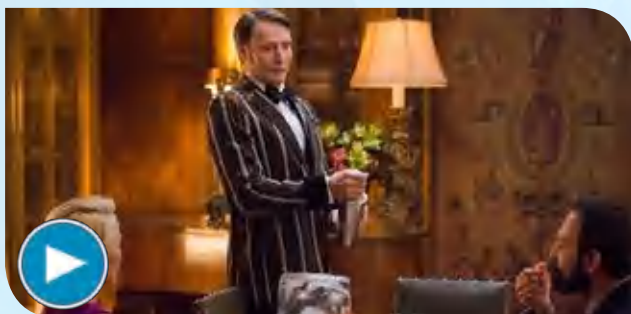
horrifying and disturbing villain.

The supporting cast are also incredibly solid, including Lotte Verbeek, Graham McTavish and Laura Donnelly, who is a particular standout as the no-nonsense Jenny Fraser. Scotland is really a character of its own in this show, and the location shooting is simply sublime with vast, sweeping vistas of the Highlands being a certain mark of high quality, and adding greatly to the epic scope and size of the story. Everything else, from the costumes, the production design, the cinematography to the atmospheric score adds immensely into making that world believably rich and dense.

Many people will no doubt compare this to *Game of Thrones*, but *Outlander* is an entirely different beast from its Westeros counterpart. Its first season took us through many uncharted paths and turns along the journey, but it succeeds in creating a well-done, epic adventure that is benefited strongly by a sweeping and beautifully designed world, top-notch performances (particularly Balfe, Heughan and Menzies) and a strong story that has real pace and consistency. An outstanding debut on almost every level.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★ 9



HANNIBAL – SEASON 3

BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / CREATOR: BRYAN FULLER / STARRING: MADDS MIKKELSEN, HUGH DANCY, LAURENCE FISHBURNE, GILLIAN ANDERSON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

At the end of Season Two of Hannibal, the titular sociopathic psychiatrist severed the ties (pun intended) with soul mate Will Graham. As intriguingly voyeuristic as that relationship was, it had to come to an end; and come to a bloody end it did. The beginning of Season Three finds Hannibal Lecter (Mikkelsen) exploring Europe with his part victim, part intellectual muse Bedelia (Anderson) and continuing his macabre, operatically murderous

existence more publicly than ever. Someone is going to notice.

The third and final season of what is undoubtedly one of the most stylish television series ever conceived contains all the elements you've grown to love. The stunning beauty of the design is matched only by the glorious locations, with Paris and Florence adding considerable weight to an aesthetic already overflowing with sumptuous splendour. Architecture and art provide

a backdrop to something that was missing for large parts of the previous seasons; Hannibal being Hannibal. The darker side of the anti-hero (and who doesn't love him?) comes to the fore as he slays his victims, with the breathy Bedelia watching on. Sadly, for the most part, the elements that frustrate also continue in this series. Languorous scene-setting and culinary pre-ambles at times serve to draw you out of the action, and while part of showrunner Bryan Fuller's vision, become just a tad too ponderous. Anyone not entirely enraptured with Hannibal's narrative style will find themselves blowing out their cheeks on more than a few occasions.

The introduction of a new character does add some impetus and gives the lead characters something new to focus on aside from their own psychological duelling. The Tooth Fairy (Armitage) challenges the existing status quo and provides a fitting, highly competent new antagonist. Those familiar with the series'

source book Red Dragon will be familiar with the story's arc but the finale is still both shocking and strangely poetic.

If there are to be no more episodes, and the likelihood is that there will not, then Hannibal will be remembered as something unique in this new golden age of television. Police procedural dramas are frustratingly common but none have captured the abhorrent yet compelling beauty of the serial killer's art quite like Fuller's Hannibal. Perhaps too pompous and overwrought at times, perhaps even occasional too slow of pace, Hannibal has never been anything other than a visual feast wrapped around an unpredictable battle of intellect. And rarely will actors so inhabit roles made famous by others to such a degree that any previous incarnations fade in the memory.

Perhaps in the future Hannibal will have plans to call on us again.

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS – THE COMPLETE SEASON 1-7

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: ALFRED HITCHCOCK, ALAN NAPIER, DICK YORK, CLAUDE RAINS, HAZEL COURT, WALTER MATTHAU, PETER LORRE, FAY WRAY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's possibly the opening moments of each episode – the distinctive silhouette of a master director set to Charles Gounod's Funeral March of a Marionette, a motif that would become synonymous with the great man, and the incredibly witty and pithy monologues that follow, that define the series Alfred Hitchcock Presents and make it so memorable.

But there's plenty more to recommend this newly-released box set of the seven series during which the show went under the 'Presents' name before expanding running time of the stories and becoming The Alfred Hitchcock Hour. Within

the 268 episodes included in this set are some of the most memorable half-hours of American television, with input from some of the finest talent. Hitchcock himself directs seventeen stories, which makes them well worth spinning to for curiosity value alone (they are brilliant, though). There are also episodes with such legendary directors as Robert Altman, Ida Lupino, William Friedkin, Arthur Hiller, and John Brahm at the helm. That's before we get to the array of acting talent, including Vincent Price in one Season Two episode. Later shows such as Boris Karloff's Thriller and The Twilight Zone may be

better known in genre circles, since the stories in Presents are often more crime related with a hint of the macabre and a large dollop of irony. While there are not many of the episodes that have gone into the global consciousness like some of the Zone stories have, they still pack quite a punch. In fact, one Season Five story, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge, later appeared in the final season of Twilight Zone, albeit in an imported French adaptation.

Standout episodes in the mammoth collection include the premiere story, Revenge, directed by Hitchcock, and setting the tone perfectly as a husband takes the law into his own hands when his wife is left traumatised by an assault. Into Thin Air is a variation on the same tale that influenced the maestro's own The Lady Vanishes (as he admits himself in the introduction), and contains the same spirally level of paranoia and frustration. Anxiety and suspicion are also amped to the max in The Creeper, in which a murderer has put a community in fear; one particular woman is awaiting a locksmith to put a chain on her door while her husband is working away and becomes increasingly distressed. The inimitable Bette Davis makes a

batty pre-Baby Jane appearance in Season Four's Out There – Nothing, and is almost upstaged by an adorable poodle! As mentioned, it's Hitchcock's dry delivery and affable charm in the segments that bookend the stories that make this an indispensable collection. With swipes at the show sponsors and various visual aids and tricks, these are never dull and cemented the director's reputation as a character as well as the world's leading director of suspense.

The epilogues usually feature Hitch explaining that the perpetrators got their just desserts, probably to offset the occasionally ambiguous (but always satisfying) conclusions to the stories. The seasons are also available separately, and are highly recommended for fans of the master of suspense and classic television in general, and while there are no special features, the picture quality is superb (shame we couldn't get Blu-ray, though). With well over 100 hours of viewing, it'll certainly keep you busy! Hopefully, we'll get the remaining three seasons soon.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



HELLRAISER: THE SCARLET BOX LIMITED EDITION TRILOGY

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: CLIVE BARKER, TONY RANDEL, ANTHONY HICKOX / SCREENPLAY: CLIVE BARKER, PETER ATKINS / STARRING: DOUG BRADLEY, ASHLEY LAURENCE, CLARE HIGGINS, KENNETH CRANHAM, TERRY FARRELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

With Arrow's mightily impressive spit and polish of the seminal Hellraiser trilogy, with the spectral gleam of sweat and the lines of a finger joint clearer than they've ever been, comes the realisation that we've been watching it wrong all these years. Far from exposing the flaws of its rubber effects and gungey viscera, the 2K restoration reveals the vision in its truest form, and in so doing inspires a reappraisal of its

themes and mysteries.

Clive Barker's 1987 adaption of his own novella, *The Hellbound Heart*, for all its budgetary struggles and underhand politics with the now defunct American studio New World Pictures, seemed to make an overnight icon out of its breakaway beastie, Pinhead. But for us, Julia remains the captivating and uncanny lynchpin at the heart of this sordid tale. Played with theatrical gusto by Clare

Higgins, she is Lady Macbeth reimagined, luring men to her home only to bash their skulls in for her skinless lover and pleasure casualty, Frank. Brought back from whatever abyss the Cenobites left him in, by his brother's blood, no less, Frank's rebirth scene is a thing of stomach-churning beauty. Arrow have really outdone themselves in reinstilling the film's sense of enigmatic terror. So when the Cenobites enjoy their few minutes on screen, the black of their S&M garbs, the white of their flesh and the red of the blood really pop.

Forever doomed to live in its predecessor's lengthening shadow, it's hard not to be convinced by Hellbound. The pantomime style of its ingenious vision of Hell is an impressive spectacle, and the origin of Pinhead and the downfall of the Cenobites themselves add a more obvious poignancy. Even the third film, which was a meat-headed affair best defended with the old "it was the nineties" excuse, makes up for its shortcomings with its more out-there tendencies and higher production values.

Testament to the complexity of the concept,

there's far too much imagery and themes to explore in one review. Fortunately, the bounty of extras – including Kickstarted documentary *Leviathan* – more than speak for all of us. There are features there you never knew you wanted. Take *The Hellraiser Chronicles: A Question of Faith* from director R. N. Milward, which was intended for the pilot of a potential Hellraiser TV series. Its utter schlock value is almost worth the asking price alone. But more valuable still is the reverence with which every individual involved speaks about the series and its creator. The absence of Clive Barker himself is a sore spot, but as archive footage proves, he's pretty sick of his brainchild. Still, in this instance, too much of a good thing can't be bad.

Extra: Audio commentaries / Featurettes / Documentary / Behind the scenes / Interviews / Draft screenplays / Clive Barker short stories / Art cards / Image gallery / TV spots / Trailers / Collector's booklet

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



THE FIREMEN'S BALL (1967)

DUAL BD + DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: MILOŠ FORMAN / SCREENPLAY: MILOŠ FORMAN, JAROSLAV PAPOUSEK, IVAN PASSER / STARRING: JAN VOSTRČIL, JOSEF SEBÁNEK, JOSEF VALNOHA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

There are two ways to approach and discuss Miloš Forman's 1967 comedy *The Firemen's Ball*. The first is to analyse the film from a scholarly viewpoint; to delve into its satirical stance on East European Communism at the time and the inherent corruption that prevailed. The second would be to simply enjoy the film for its sense of exuberance and energy. As much as any film can be, *The Firemen's Ball* is the kind of bawdy comedy that so often misses the mark entirely, and

yet in Forman's hands comes together perfectly as the at-times seemingly random parts are woven together with a master's precision.

There is no doubt that in 1967, Forman had a point to make. As a key figure in the Czech New Wave movement, his dissatisfaction with the communist regime was clear in his films. In 1967, this dissatisfaction led to the production of *The Firemen's Ball*, which unabashedly poked fun at the system through its

depiction of well-laid plans collapsing, a central leading group made up of incompetent men, and the farce that inevitably follows. This led to the film being banned in Czechoslovakia for ever and resulted in Forman's exile in the US.

While the political imagery is impossible to ignore, analysing too closely could lead to the viewer ignoring the fun Forman seemed to be having with his subject matter. When a group of amateur firemen host a ball to celebrate the career of one of their senior members, everything that could go wrong does. Besides the slowly diminishing raffle prizes, apparently stolen by the guests, and the failure to deal with a house fire which occurs on the same night, is the film's gloriously uncomfortable centrepiece. In order to award the guest of honour with a "memento", the hapless organising committee hastily convene a beauty pageant, the idea being the most beautiful girl will carry out the presentation. Never in the history of cinema has a less appropriate beauty line-up

been assembled, and Forman can barely contain his glee at the slapstick events that follow, while still finding time to poke fun at authority.

Forman will predominantly be remembered for the films he made in the US following his exile. With the number of Oscars rightly awarded to his two most renowned films, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Amadeus*, including Best Director and Best Picture for both, his early films have perhaps received less attention than they deserve. Look closely at *The Firemen's Ball* and you can see the same traits throughout. The naturalistic, exuberant performances that rail against authority and the semi-tragic leads are notable in many of Forman's works. Rarely though did the comedy blend so perfectly with these tropes as it did in *The Firemen's Ball*, and as such this is a film that deserves a new audience.

Extras: Archive interviews / Featurette

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



THE MAN FROM THE FUTURE

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: CLÁUDIO TORRES / STARRING: WAGNER MOURA, ALINNE MORAES, MARIA LUÍSA MENDONÇA, FERNANDO CEYLÃO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Cláudio Torres' quirky, inventive Brazilian time-paradox sci-fi drama (don't worry, it's subtitled... wait, why are you still running?) released in 2011 finally gets a UK DVD release (other formats are undoubtedly available) and it's great fun. Wagner Moura plays brilliant scientist Joao (known as 'Zero' following a cruel, confidence-sapping incident during

his student years), whose experiments with a particle accelerator send him back in time to 1991 – and the very moment when he is very publicly humiliated and betrayed by his beautiful girlfriend Helena (Moraes) at a college party. Zero quickly seizes the opportunity to change history but in doing so alters his own timeline; he discovers that in the future

he's now become an obscenely wealthy but horribly corrupt businessman who has still managed to lose the girl of his dreams. He still has the ability to travel back in time to change things; but can Zero and, indeed, history, cope with the prospect of three versions of the same person existing in the same time and place, each of them with different agendas?

The Man from the Future is a fast-paced, occasionally over-played time travel romp which treats its time paradox storyline with great intelligence and sensitivity, taking time to consider the ramifications of a man travelling back to tamper with his own history and the dangers inherent in someone choosing to keep on doing so until he gets the desired result – and how disastrous the consequences can be. This isn't a film powered by flashy visuals – though there are some decent FX sequences when Zero travels through time and the camera trickery to create three Zeros is deft and convincing. But it's quietly comedic, too; Zero is a genius but he's a bit bumbling

and manic and, in his earliest incarnation, utterly lacking in self-confidence, while Ricardo, his rival for Maria's affections, is a louche, stereotypical sleazeball. But the film nimbly keeps its central time travel conceit rolling and, despite the potential for the story to lose its coherence and clarity, it actually becomes more intriguing and impressively adept at keeping its various balls in the air without fumbling any of them.

The Man from the Future is a treat for fans of thought-provoking, serpentine time travel stories. It's refreshing to see a world cinema genre movie handling the sort of material Hollywood churns out from its conveyor belt with a lot more passion, enthusiasm and intelligence than many budget-bloated mainstream efforts which repeatedly put the emphasis on bang and bluster over brains. The Man from the Future is, to coin an apt phrase, worth your time. Grande filme, recommenda!

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S BLACK CATS

DUAL BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: LUCIO FULCI, SERGIO MARTINI / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: PATRICK MAGEE, MIMSY FARMER, DAVID WARBECK, AL CLIVER, EDWIGE FENECH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We suspect you've noticed that there are rather a lot of film adaptations of Edgar Allan Poe's The Black Cat. Some are good, some less so, and a few of them are even vaguely connected to Poe's original story (only vaguely, mind). What we have here is a Blu-ray boxset of two Italian versions: Lucio Fulci's unimaginatively titled The Black Cat (1981) and Sergio Martino's preposterously titled Your Vice Is a Locked Room and Only I Have the Key (1972).

In The Black Cat, Professor Miles' (Patrick Magee) cat carries out a series of brutal murders (no, really) and so the professor

decides to hang it with a teeny-tiny noose (no, really). Your mother would most definitely not approve. However, that just pisses off the titular moggy even more, so things get entirely out of hand with Miles killing someone himself only to be betrayed to the police by that damn cat at the denouement (as is the traditional end of most versions of the story, so that's not a spoiler).

Puzzling, the film is clearly set in an English village despite a map of Scotland on the police station wall. You see, an Italian film made in Britain with a British cast is a bit strange. We weren't even sure what language the cast

were originally speaking. If you watch the English version, there's a definite feeling that at least some of the cast are dubbed while others might not be. That's Magee's voice but are his lips matching his words? We honestly weren't sure. As the Inspector's (David Warbeck) attempts at flirting with the heroine (Mimsy Farmer) are absolutely woeful, we also suspect Fulci didn't have the highest opinion of our romantic capabilities either, but hey-ho. And don't get us on to the professor's rather interesting attempts at communicating with the dead that go absolutely nowhere. Almost as if the scriptwriters forgot what they were setting up. But while The Black Cat seems like a messy cross between Hammer House of Horror and Midsomer Murders, it's actually quite fun.

With Sergio Martino at the helm, it's no surprise that YVIALRAOIHTK (we're not typing all that out again) is full-on giallo. Oliviero Rouvigny (Luigi Pistilli) is an alcoholic obsessed with his dead mother and he sleeps with apparently every woman in town, which is odd because he's utterly charmless. In fact, the numerous sex scenes usually start with Rouvigny abusing women as a form of foreplay; including those with his oft-humiliated wife

(Anita Strindberg). This only works in Italian cinema; don't try this in real life. They often dress as his mother to gain his questionable attentions and you definitely shouldn't try that one at home. Oh, and Rouvigny has a cat he adores called Satan who seems to have it in for his wife. Of course he does. Guess what happens to the cat. Then his niece (Edwige Fenech) turns up and sleeps with everyone (really, everyone). Anyway, there are murders in the town and it looks like there's your standard giallo serial killer about. Who is it? Well, whoever it is, you know that cat is going to give the game away at the end.

Actually, the combination of Poe and giallo works rather well here. Giallo is always good value, and the Poe theme just gives a little twist beyond the usual sex/murder/pretty-visual tropes of the genre. So that'll be 5/10 for The Black Cat and 8/10 for the Other One. As we don't have a graphic for a half, we make that a rounded 7.

Extras: English and Italian versions / Featurettes / Interviews / Booklet

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE SKULL (1965)

DUAL BD + DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: FREDDIE FRANCIS / SCREENPLAY: MILTON SUBOTSKY / STARRING: PETER CUSHING, CHRISTOPHER LEE, JILL BENNETT, PATRICK WYMARK, NIGEL GREEN, PATRICK MAGEE, PETER WOODTHORPE, MICHAEL GOUGH, MAURICE GOOD / RELEASED: OUT NOW

Amicus might have seemed like lightweights in comparison to the horror specialists at Hammer, but they certainly gave their rivals a run for their money when their blood was up. There were all those much-loved portmanteaus (or is that portmanteaux?) but as they were quite prepared to wheel out the big guns on the rest of their horror output, they're always worth a watch. So we should never underestimate Amicus with a Robert Bloch story (he wrote Psycho) and a bit of Pete

and Chris at their finest. It's a good start.

And on the subject of good starts, The Skull opens with a pre-credits sequence in a 19th century graveyard that would shame any cemetery Hammer ever knocked up. If we're judging a movie by its body exhumation scene (as good a way as any) this is a bona fide classic as Pierre the Phrenologist (Maurice Good) digs up no less than the Marquis de Sade and nicks his head. What was he thinking? That skull will be floating about

and making people do Bad Things before you know it even if Pierre makes it to the opening credits (which he doesn't). But Amicus were on a roll here, so post-credits we're at a present day auction with Dr. Christopher Maitland (Peter Cushing) and Sir Matthew Phillips (Christopher Lee) going head-to-head for some weird occult statues. What's not to like? Needless to say, it turns out Big Chris has the most money. Of course he has.

After that, The Skull doesn't keep the thrill-factor quite as high. Patrick Wymark does a good sleazy antiques dealer who flogs the titular skull to Maitland but it turns out he pinched off Phillips who, as it happens, is rather pleased to be rid of it as it moves about of its own accord and calls him to join in nocturnal weird-stuff-with-mysterious-things at certain times of the month. You have to admire the Lovecraftian vagueness of that sort of thing. From then on we're into some quite well done hallucinogenic stuff and some predictable Doing Bad Things territory. No real surprises unless you count Nigel Green

turning up for an all-too-brief performance as the inevitable Inspector investigating the aforementioned rumness. He's even got Patrick Magee along as the police surgeon. Were these guys just hanging round the canteen that day? Throw in Peter Woodthorpe out-sleazing everybody as the dodgy dealer's landlord and The Skull is a lot of fun even if it doesn't quite live up to the expectations of the opening scenes.

While this is a pretty earnest attempt by Amicus at outdoing Hammer, The Skull is basically a fairly predictable piece of '60s horror saved by some great performances and some nice touches here and there. But it looks good on Blu-ray and it's pretty good fun so we'd still recommend it as long as you're forgiving enough to be chilled by a skull floating unconvincingly around Peter Cushing's living room.

Extras: Interviews with Jonathan Rigby and Kim Newman / Booklet

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★ 6



SHARKNADO 3: OH HELL NO!

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ANTHONY C. FERRANTE / SCREENPLAY: THUNDER LEVIN / STARRING: IAN ZIERING, TARA REID, CASSIE SCERBO, BO DEREK, DAVID HASSELHOFF / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 23RD

We have come a long way since the B-movie creature features of the '50s and '60s, or have we? For years now, every animal known to man, from cobras to shrews, has been genetically mutated or manipulated for the cheesy thrills of a viewing audience. However, the notable standouts in this 'nature attacks' genre have generally gone that little bit further to distinguish themselves from the crowd.

Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No! is, of course, rubbish and it knows

it, here endeth our logical review. This is a knowing series and, more likely than not, most sitting down to watch a film called Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No! will approve. The thing that has clearly made the series a success is its level of open awfulness. In this third film, this remains the case but it must be said that after three movies, the concept is left with nowhere to go... not that this will make one iota of difference. The story (!) sees the tropical shark-laden storms start up again along the east coast, only

the game has changed and the storms are joining together! Naturally, chainsaw-wielding hero Fin Shepard (Ziering) takes it upon himself to save the world (or more importantly, America)... again. From a shark entering orbit in a fish belly, a baby escaping a charred shark gut, and water skiing with priceless art in the White House, this film does have its share of barmy brilliance, but to what overall effect? You decide.

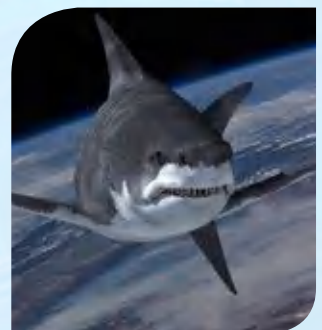
Chock full of cameos (including WWE Legend Chris Jericho, Jerry Springer and even Jedward) once again, it's more a game than a movie as we play spot the 'star'. Half of the film plays like a silly advert for Universal Orlando and the other a NASA ad as co-directed by Michael Bay and a drunken (and likely disgraced) ichthyologist. This sequel is admittedly enjoyable in the same brainless ways as its predecessors, be it the eye-rolling dialogue, ridiculous logic-defying action or the naff effects, but when will it be enough?

Love it or hate it, this straight-to-screen movement has grown to defy criticism for it embraces flaw over flair. The future of a lead 'character' was

left open to a hashtag Twitter vote when it aired months ago, so you can look at it two ways - this franchise is either a first step into social viewing participation or a slippery slope into how movies are shared. This is a bad film, with product placement tattooed into every scale, and yet it is what it is meant to be. There is no way to review this as a movie as it isn't one, it is a bizarre fandom whereby you either love it, hate it or get drunk enough that this becomes Citizen Kane with gills and gale force winds. Whatever the case, you can ignore the rating; you already know if you will like this!

JACK BOTTOMLEY

★★★★★ 5



THE LATEST NEWS
FROM THE WORLD OF
AUDIO ADVENTURES
BY TONY JONES

AUDIOSTATIC



Big Finish Announcements

Yet another busy month for Big Finish; as you may have read in **Outside the Box**, they announced a new series of three adventures for the Tenth Doctor (David Tennant) and Donna Noble (Catherine Tate). The box set will be available in May 2016 with the titles also available separately. However, Tennant is no stranger to Big Finish. Before he became the Doctor, he was a regular audio performer and appeared in a series of **Dalek Empire**, the wonderfully strange **The Adventures of Luther Arkwright** and even a couple of main range **Doctor Who** titles, **Colditz** and **Medicinal Purposes**, along with some of the **Unbound** range.

In the midst of a Halloween sale, Big Finish also announced a full-cast dramatisation of **Dracula** with Mark Gatiss in the title role of Bram Stoker's classic. This four-disc release will also appear in May 2016. The horror news continued with the news that February 2016 will see the release of a collection of readings from Dan Starkey - **Carnacki**, **The Ghost-Finder**. This is a set of interpretations of the stories of William Hope Hodgson.

SPRINGHEEL'D JACK Returns

The Wireless Theatre Company released the first episode of their third (and final) series of **Springheel'd Jack**. A STARBURST favourite, these stories are set in Victorian London (and beyond), centring on detective Jonah Smith. The series is called **The Secret of Springheel'd Jack**. The first episode (available to download now from wirelesstheatrecompany.co.uk) is entitled **The Peril of Empires** (see our review on page 95). November will reveal **The Tunnels of Death**, while no date (or title) has been announced as yet for the final episode.

STRANGENESS IN SPACE

After the first two successful episodes of sci-fi comedy **Strangeness in Space** the producers have been raising funds for the next two editions. Written by and starring cult children's TV legends Trevor

and Simon (famous for swinging their pants on a Saturday morning) with former **Doctor Who** companion Sophie Aldred, the series is a fabulous and wacky adventure that's suitable for all the family. There are several items of merchandise available at strangenessinspace.com, including signed Christmas cards, and everything goes to help the series continue, and also get the fictional pop band in the series, Pink Custard, a chance to reach the Yuletide charts as they record their own single. Should the campaign be successful, the troop will be heading back into the studio as you read this.

BIG FINISH WE LOVE STORIES

Key titles to watch out for this month from Big Finish...

DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES

2.03: THE BLACK HOLE

More from the Second Doctor's tenure, this time investigating why time is standing still at a research station based near a black hole. Rufus Hound, who recently appeared on screen as the fast-talking highwayman Sam Swift in *The Woman Who Lived*, voices Constable Pavo and the story is narrated by the legendary David Warner.

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 30th

+++

SURVIVORS – SERIES THREE

The classic BBC series returns as a full-cast audio once more in another four stories: *Cabin Fever* by Jonathan Morris, *Contact* by Simon Clark, *Rescue* by Andrew Smith, and *Matt Fitton's Leaving*. Original series stars Carolyn Seymour and Richard Heffer reprise their roles, and Chase Masterson leads the rest of the impressive cast.

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 30th

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THE CONFESSIONS OF DORIAN GRAY – SERIES 4

Alexander Vlahos returns as the alt-reality version of the hedonistic classic character, whose friendship with Oscar Wilde influenced the novel. This collection of eight stories promises to continue the supernatural horror and is certainly not for younger listeners!

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 30th

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TORCHWOOD: 1.1 THE CONSPIRACY

The ever-popular Captain Jack Harkness (John Barrowman) makes a welcome return in a new series of audio adventures centred around the Torchwood Institute and their investigations into aliens on Earth. John Sessions provides his dulcet tones in a guest role.

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 30th

+++

UNIT: EXTINCTION

The Autons and the Nestene Consciousness are back and it's down to Kate Stewart (Jemma Redgrave) and her UNIT team to save the day. Another fan-favourite, Osgood (played by Ingrid Oliver) returns to make this four-story set and essential purchase.

OUT NOW

To order, or for more information, head over to bigfinish.com

STARBURST

REVIEWS

THE LATEST AUDIO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



MANOS: THE HANDS OF FATE
COMPOSER: ROBERT SMITH JR., RUSS
HUDDLESTON / LABEL: SHIP TO SHORE
PHONOGRAPH CO. / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The 1966 film *Manos: The Hands of Fate* is frequently found in DVD collections such as *The Best of the Worst*, and is also one of the few Mystery Science Theater 3000 episodes to receive its own standalone release. It's rather notorious. The score and dialogue provide most of the cohesion for *Manos*, which was shot on 16mm, and the hand-wound camera only allowed for 32 seconds per shot. Thus, the dialogue – which was looped in post – and the score

are the only elements which manage to exist for more than one shot. That said, Ship to Shore Phonograph Co. still didn't have the entirety of the score with which to work with here. Earlier this year, the original 35mm soundtrack negative for *Manos* was finally discovered and underwent a detailed restoration to clean up the audio. It turned out so well that they put the music up on Bandcamp, and now we have Ship to Shore releasing it on vinyl. What do we end up with?

Well, it's essentially a "movie on record" release, similar to the old *Star Wars* or Disney releases from the '70s. By pulling the audio from the 35mm print, you're necessarily going to end up with dialogue layered on top of the musical track – otherwise, you'd have a series of 55 second snippets of music. And frankly, the dialogue provides a bit of a throughline and breaks up what can be very repetitive minimalist jazz.

The score is a small jazz trio, playing mood music that does an excellent job of underscoring the bizarre imagery onscreen. It's discomfiting, yet still strangely catchy. Smith and Huddleston's exotica isn't out of the ordinary for a film such as this, especially when you look at Les Baxter's later work for *Cry of the Banshee* and *The Dunwich Horror*.

An Unfulfilled Desire is muffled and warbly, betraying the nearly 50-year-old source from which it comes, but other than

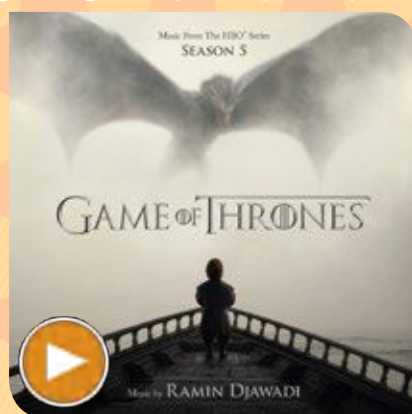
that, there's also a small amount of hiss which permeates the entirety of the score, which ultimately only adds to the atmosphere. The other downside is that, because the audio is sourced from that print, the individual pieces are only as long as they are in the film.

In terms of the instrumental pieces, that's fine, because the dialogue strings them together in a fairly coherent manner, allowing for the record to maintain some narrative shape in place of musical cohesion. However, singer Nicki Mathis' work on *Love Inside This Magic Circle* is a brilliant piece of lounge singing we'd love to have in its entirety. Given how lovely *Forgetting You* (*Love Theme from Manos: The Hands of Fate*) is, one can only guess.

If you love *Manos: The Hands of Fate*, you'll need to get your hands on this. The essay by Tim Farrante which is included makes for some good further background, and for all of the issues with the completeness of the music, this really sounds good. If you like what Herschel Gordon Lewis did with the likes of *Blood Feast*, you'll also be down for some minimalist creepiness. The packaging is stellar as well, with that cover art the best interpretation of the film we've yet seen.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★ 7



GAME OF THRONES: MUSIC FROM THE HBO SERIES SEASON 5
COMPOSER: RAMIN DJAWADI / LABEL: MUSIC ON VINYL - AT THE MOVIES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

There's a certain amount of irony to the fact that, while this particular writer doesn't particularly care for sword and sorcery fantasy films or television programs, I absolutely adore the scores for them. It likely has something to do with the fact that the films themselves

are frequently poorly acted messes or burdened with overly complicated plots, whilst the music is usually expansive and majestic. Such is the case for Ramin Djawadi's music for *Game of Thrones*.

This instalment is, obviously, not all of the music for the show's fifth season, but it does contain the most often-used themes, and those which score the rather more notable highlights. Despite being sequenced exactly the same as the compact disc release, the *Music on Vinyl* version consolidates tracks into chunks of four or five individual pieces.

The double LP collection does a wonderful job of emphasising the commonality of the particular aspects of the included pieces, turning each of the four sides into a series of suites. Additionally, each pseudo-suite ends on something of a cliffhanger note, leading to a series of panicked rushes to the turntable, flipping over each LP to get to what's next.

Side One into Side Two is a bit obvious, being parts one and two of *Hardhome*, but when one switches LPs from the first to the second, it's an even more frantic change. Side Two ends with

Kneel for No Man, and the response it evokes is something akin to, "Oh, hell – what could possibly be next after this?!"

High Sparrow is next, that's what. It starts out ominously, then fully ratchets up to full creepy chorus mode, setting the stage for Side Four, and the final suite of music. The final one is the most effective, combining three very dark and ominous themes (and one bonus track). Concluding this trio of terror is *Son of the Harpy*, which will delight any fan of choral-laden ominous themes. Think Rosemary's Baby combined with Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* and you're still only halfway to how effective this piece of music is.

This double LP positively flies by. Any fan of fantasy scores should already have this on their radar, but even those like myself, who don't really care for that genre of entertainment, will find themselves enraptured by Djawadi's music. It's a perfect distillation of everything this sort of music should be: powerful, frightening, moody, and – above all – epic.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★★★ 9



TORCHWOOD: FALL TO EARTH

AUTHOR: JAMES GOSS / DIRECTOR: SCOTT HANDCOCK / PUBLISHER: BIG FINISH / STARRING: GARETH DAVID-LLOYD, LISA ZAHRA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ah, this is more like it. After a lacklustre first outing for Big Finish's new Torchwood range, this two-hander is a real return to form – well, it's technically a three-hander, but the other person's appearance is so brief we didn't remember it until we started writing this sentence.

In places, Fall to Earth will remind Doctor Who viewers of Voyage of the Damned, but that's no bad thing. It's different enough and the premise (Ianto Jones trying to stop a new spaceship from crashing with him aboard) is one that is fantastically well realised in an audio format (there are a few minor niggles but nothing that majordly stands out).

The noir-style narration that was all over The Conspiracy is practically all gone, replaced by a long mobile phone conversation with a strong contender for the unluckiest insurance agent to ever walk the planet. It reminds the listener of black box tapes, which was no doubt the idea. Part of the appeal of this is that it's so easy to put yourself in her shoes; it's fair to say that most people would be out of their depth in a situation like that, and the way that she develops as a person over the course of the story is something out of the very best Doctor Who episodes.

But the major surprise of this release is how genuinely

funny it is. Goss' dialogue is witty and sharp while maintaining an air of black comedy throughout. We never thought we'd say a glorified black box recording could be laugh-a-minute, but here we are.

Where was Goss years ago when the TV incarnation of Torchwood was in dire need of quality episodes? It's hard to see how the series could get any better, but by god we hope they manage it when Forgotten Lives rolls around. Recommend this to all your Ianto-loving friends.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



HOOD: WARRIORS' HARVEST

AUTHOR: IAIN MEADOWS / STARRING: LEE INGLEBY, SARAH MCKENDRICK, BILLY MILLER, IAN BROOKER, DAMIAN COOPER, SEAN CONNOLLY / PUBLISHER: SPITEFUL PUPPET / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Spiteful Puppet's fresh and novel take on the legend of Robin Hood has been a breath of fresh air: a nuanced and well thought-out take on the myth. Nottingham's most famous rogue has always leant itself to darker reinterpretations; after all, this pseudo-historical hero is a sort of medieval terrorist.

In Hood, there is no true 'Robin Hood' character. What we have is a collection of outlaws, scheming nobles and a Sheriff who isn't exactly a hero but tends to have the interests of the people in mind. This simple consideration for those that he is meant to serve, protect and shepherd marks him out head and shoulders above the rest of the characters in Sherwood. Spiteful Puppet have used this series to

establish the backstories of each of the principal characters so far. We know why the Sheriff is kind but not wise, why the Lady Marion is as duplicitous and vicious as she is, and why Robert De Loxley, aka Hood, is such an arrogant ass. This recent instalment, Warriors' Harvest, doesn't feature Will Scarlett and Little John quite as much as previous episodes, but that's understandable. Warriors' Harvest is primarily the story of the Sheriff, Phillip De Nicholay.

The story opens with things approaching stability for the people of Nottingham. Loxley is still an outlaw but the people seem sort of happy and the land is stable. Unfortunately, mismanagement of the food supply means that

De Nicholay is going to have to negotiate with Hood. Even worse, the maundering Celts from previous episodes are still on the rampage and have set their eyes on the legendary Hood, believing that he has powers they can steal.

Lee Ingleby puts in a fine performance as the much-beleaguered hero, and Sarah McKendrick supplies her outrageous French accent yet again for the role of Lady Marion. Actor Billy Miller steals the show as the outrageously louche and malevolent William De Warrene, friend of the King. Overall, this is a great episode in a series that is quickly becoming unmissable.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



THE PERIL OF THE EMPIRES (THE SPRINGHEEL SAGA SERIES 3)

AUTHOR: GARETH PARKER, ROBERT VALENTINE / STARRING: CHRISTOPHER FINNEY, JONATHAN HANSLER, PAUL ANTHONY, / PUBLISHER: THE WIRELESS THEATRE COMPANY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After a lengthy break, the Wireless Theatre Company has returned to The Springheel Saga in force. With an explosive opening and

several major twists early on, the stage is being set for a grand finale and the end of Jonah Smith's personal war with the supernatural killer.

Set several years after the cataclysmic end to Series Two, Smith is a broken man. Retired and driven by little more than drink, he seems to have all but given up on his old conflict with the murderous creature known as Jack. However, his old life is not yet done with him just yet. Striking again, Jack attacks a military barracks head on, seeking some unknown object and several factions come to Smith for answers.

As the beginning of the end for the saga, The Peril of the Empires starts out strong. Along with quickly establishing the major players of this arc, it offers Chris Finney a new direction to take Smith in and truly show

off his acting talents after his character hits rock bottom. While many of his scenes serve to fill in the audience on some vital details, they're nevertheless extremely atmospheric and present the world in a brilliantly grim light.

The story also gives one of the best depictions of Springheel Jack's seemingly unstoppable nature. While brief and presenting only a fleeting look at his attack, the sheer speed in which he storms the barracks and breezes through its defenders is excellently detailed, building a clear image through performances and sound effects.

Apparently, Valentine wanted to make this part their "Victorian-age James Bond movie", a desire reflected as much in the action as in the intrigue present in the tale. Less a detective story and more out-and-out political thriller

this time, Smith is woefully out of his depth. While offering some great new additional villains and storytelling opportunities, it is also set on a much grander scale than before, with code names and foreign figures aplenty.

If there is a criticism to be brought up, it's that this new entry can seem a little too much as if the story is trying to start over. It has a new beginning, almost an entirely new cast, and while the weight of old cases is felt on Smith himself some story elements feel as if they're being brushed into the background.

Overall, there's never been a better time to start on this saga. If you're after an outstanding 1800s supernatural murder mystery, look no further.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 8

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



There is a veritable cornucopia of imaginary film scores to be had in the coming months. From Cineploit, there's the latest from Videogram. Entitled **Pre-Cert**, the LP pays homage to themes from classic video nasty-type scores. Tracks include styles as diverse as Roberto Donati's **Eaten Alive** and Sylvester Levay's **Cobra**, amongst others. However, the nearly 13-minute, five-part tribute to John Carpenter's **The Thing**, entitled *Man is the Warmest Place to Hide*, is the stunning highlight. Two of the tracks, *Camp Blood* and *Voorhees Stomp*, which look back to Harry Manfredini's horror disco theme for **Friday the 13th Part III**, will also see release as a 10-inch picture disc soon thereafter.

Come December, Cineploit also has the latest from Zoltan and Thelema out with the *Camp Blood* picture disc. Zoltan's **Phantasm** and **Tanz der Vampire** will feature three songs from each film, while Thelema's **Beyond the Truth** pays tribute to Elliot Lawrence's score from the Sidney Lumet classic, **Network**.

If that wasn't enough, Disko

Nero Recordings has the 'original 1982 soundtrack' to **Alien Terrors**, as performed by Gavino Morretti. It's the follow-up to last year's **Assault of the Living Dead**. While that faux score referenced the likes of **Day of the Dead**, **Zombie Flesh Eaters**, and various pieces of Goblin's work, this takes a nod from films such as **Alien**, as well as more



Goblin – although, in this case, it's more **Contamination** than **Dawn of the Dead**. Solid, fun stuff, available as a Bandcamp download or limited edition red C58 cassette.

Waxwork Records announced they have a double vinyl LP of the Danny Elfman score to **Goosebumps**, and if that wasn't crazy enough news, they managed to land the book series' cover illustrator, Tim Jacobus, to do all the artwork. In addition to a cover that perfectly sums up every book you ever saw on your school's library shelves, there's an absolutely amazing gatefold featuring some of the most iconic **Goosebumps** characters. Given that it's a double LP, we expect all of the bonus tracks from the compact disc release to be on there, as well.

The label has also put out a deluxe double LP for the Popol Vuh score to Werner Herzog's **Nosferatu the Vampire**. It's an expanded version of the soundtrack, which includes four songs not on any prior release of the score, although they were included on the Popol Vuh album, **Brüder des Schattens – Söhne des Lichts**.

Also announced is Waxwork Comics, which will be the publisher of a quarterly anthology comic called **House of Waxwork**. Each issue will look back to the days of the classic genre anthology, taking inspiration from **Eerie**, **Creepy**, **Tales from the Crypt**, **Shock SuspenStories**, **Weird Fantasy**, and more. Every issue also includes a soundtrack to the stories therein on a 7-inch vinyl record, unavailable anywhere else. Details haven't been released, but we're already hoping they can figure out a way to pull Jack Davis out of retirement.

Network has once again gone to the vaults to put out something really special. Later this month, the label will release a vinyl LP of the Edwin Astley



score for **The Baron**. This score has never been released before; a strange thing given the noted work of Astley on other popular '60s television programs such as **The Saint**. It's limited to 1000 copies, and has been mastered especially for vinyl from the original analogue tapes.

Milan Records is going super-'80s with the **Night Club** score for the Comedy Central animated series, **Moonbeam City**. The show is like a Patrick Nagel image come to life, and the music is the synthiest, most throwback thing since **Kung Fury**. Hearing it, you just want to get all hopped up on Glitzotrene and immediately hit the dance floor.

Speaking of synthesisers, Lakeshore Records has Daniel Davies and Sebastian Robertson's score to **Condemned** out this month. It is a nasty bit of mood music, helped along by the fact that the musicians 'tried to find synths that sounded broken or decaying,' as well as 'with frequencies so low they could alert the underworld.' How ever they tracked them down, they succeeded, as the **Condemned** music is profoundly uncomfortable, even the right banger **Black Disco**, which somehow manages to be simultaneously terrifying and dance floor ready with its four on the floor stomp.

For a complete flip, Lakeshore also has Jeff Herriott and S. Craig Zahler's score to the cannibal western, **Bone Tomahawk**. It is a spare, string-driven soundtrack that sounds more akin to a Victorian haunted house film than either western or cannibal picture. The closing track, *Four Doomed Men Ride Out*, however, is an excellent pastiche of every spaghetti western vocal theme ever composed, but really evokes a more operatic take on Luis Bacalov's **Django**.

The World Soundtrack Awards were announced last month at the closing of Belgium's Film Fest Gent. The award for Best Original Film Score of the Year went to Antonio Sanchez's **Birdman: Or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)**, and given the absolutely stellar usage of spare drums, we cannot agree more. Sanchez also received Discovery of the Year. These awards ought to make up for the Academy Award disqualification back in March. Composer of the Year went



to Michael Giacchino. Additional prizes went to John Paesano, whose score to **The Maze Runner** took the Public Choice Award, as well as a lifetime achievement award to Patrick Doyle.

As part of the World Soundtrack Awards, there is a concert featuring an overview of a composer's work, with the honour this year going to Alan Silvestri. His score for **The Walk** had its world premiere as part of the concert, as well as featuring selections from **Back to the Future**, **Predator**, **Cosmos**, and **The Polar Express**, even going deep into Silvestri's catalogue with an especially stirring rendition of the theme to Sam Raimi's western **The Quick and the Dead**. The music, as performed by the Brussels Philharmonic and the Flemish Radio Choir, is out now from Silva Screen Records.

Also coming from Silva Screen is the score to the television relaunch of the **Thunderbirds** franchise, **Thunderbirds Are Go!** The soundtrack includes highlights from brothers Ben and Nick Foster's score for the thirteen-episode series. The label has also remastered the Francis Monkman score to the classic gangster picture **The Long Good Friday** for its 35th anniversary, and also included dialogue excerpts from the film. This is all great news for those who have rediscovered the film through its recent Arrow Video Blu-ray earlier this year.

Now that Data Discs' **Shinobi III** LP is in hands, we thought we'd talk with the label's founder, Jamie Crooks. We were curious as to what has led to Data Discs becoming so successful so quickly. We were also curious as to why



– given a preponderance of video game-inspired bands like Power Glove and the Minibosses – original video game music is important. Crooks feels that it's more than just nostalgia.

"The children of the '80s are all grown up and realising just how influential, whether subconsciously or not, the games of their childhood have been on their identity," explains Crooks. "In that sense, we feel it's the perfect moment for a project such as ours. There's something very satisfying about revisiting the original music, separated from games they were designed to accompany, and consider it as an artistic creation in its own right. There's something strangely comforting about it all, too."

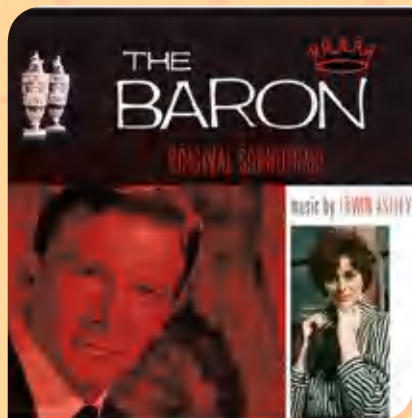
Along those lines, Crooks and Data Discs are looking to create recognisable releases. To that end, you'll notice a certain aesthetic to the label's LPs, from the front cover to the obi strip included with each.

"Our releases are designed to work as a series, so certain design elements always conform to our 'house style' (mainly the OBI strip, spine and label designs)," Crooks continues. "The inspiration behind it has much more to do with Japanese ambient records than it does with video game packaging."

While the packaging is distinct, Data Discs is focused on the music. That's part of the reason Data Discs releases don't include liner notes – Crooks doesn't think they're very important. In general, Crooks says, Data Discs tries not to overload our releases with too many extras; preferring to focus on producing great sounding records in elegant, distinctive sleeves. They intend their records to be played and to be an enjoyable listening experience and standalone albums in their own right.

"So we need to consider how to bring the best out of the material and generally bring together the body of the sound," says the label founder. "For example, perhaps reducing some of the more grating sounds that you wouldn't notice on a TV, but suddenly become overly apparent when played on hi-fi equipment."

Given the quality introduced by the label thus far, and the readily-evident thought in the releases going forward, we can't wait to see what Data Discs has in store for us.





INTERVIEW - HARRY MANFREDINI

Last year, Waxwork Records began reissuing the HARRY MANFREDINI soundtracks to the FRIDAY THE 13TH series on gorgeously loaded vinyl LPs. We spoke with the composer about the process of bringing these iconic works to wax...

STARBURST: Given that you've got these reissues of the F13 releases coming out, and it's a whole series of releases, what's the difference between scoring the first film in a series versus the future instalments?

Harry Manfredini: At least in terms of *Friday the 13th*, the first one was really a completely different movie, because it was more like a murder mystery – like a whodunit, really. Who's knocking off all of these people in various ways? Whereas, after that, it just becomes Jason, who's like the shark, you know? He's going to knock off everybody, no matter what. It's a completely different attitude.

I know that you get the question: 'How in the world do you keep doing sequels of these movies?' The idea, though, was to somehow or other keep the same sonic quality to the film and keep the Jason sound in there [for the sequels], but the idea that made it easier for me to do it is that they took enough time between pictures that, somehow or another, I'd buy a new piece of gear.

And another thing is that every film had a scene in there where I'd go, 'Oh, that's a really cool scene' and that scene would perk my imagination. In *Part II*, for example, *Return to Chez Jason* – where Amy Steele went back into the sort of lair where Jason had his mom's head, and there's some candles, and she puts on his mom's sweater and looks like her – blonde hair, and sweater and all – and she just psyches him out. I saw that and thought, 'Wow. Now that's an interesting approach to something'. That's what inspired me and got me motivated to go and create the sound that was new for the whole film.

With each ensuing one, that's what would happen: I would buy a Yamaha DX-7 or CS-80, or whatever new piece of gear that I had, and I would go, 'Well, I can do that!' You'd be surprised at how easily that can go. So, a lot of times, it's just a function of that and something in the picture that says, 'Oh, that's what this is about!'

Do directors now come to you with a specific idea of what they want from you, given your decades as a composer?

Some do, some don't. Sean [Cunningham, *Friday the 13th*] pretty much lets me do whatever I think, and then subsequently, will listen to it and say, 'Hey, can you do this?', 'I really like that', or 'Oh, you went in that direction – why don't we try going in a completely opposite direction?' Because you can score things in a lot of different ways with something like that, but usually, he lets me go my own way and I'm usually right, because he usually says, 'That's sounds really good' or 'could you give me an extra helping of this over here?'

What's the process been working on these reissues with Waxwork versus working on the CD box set that came out on La-La Land Records a few years back?

Well, there's way less tension, I'll tell you that. No, what happened was this: you have no idea how many times people came up to me and told me they wanted to put out the first six *Friday the 13th* scores. One of the problems was that these scores did not exist. I didn't have the masters – I'd sent them to Paramount, I had nothing. No one seemed to know where they were. No one could get their hands on them. They were just not available. And, they would really need to be cleaned up and worked on, blah blah blah...

Eventually, at a lunch somewhere, the guys at Lionsgate told me they wanted to do it for their website that releases CDs. I told them that I have no masters, and I don't know where they are. Then, in the middle of lunch, a light flash, and I said, 'I just thought of something. They just re-released the six Paramount films on Blu-ray. They've been remixed, and how on earth could they have remixed them if they don't have the music? They must have something'.

One guy said that he knew so-and-so at Paramount, and he made the call right there

at the table. Then he says, 'You have an appointment on Monday. Go over there and see what you can do and what they have'.

So, I go to Paramount, and it's really cool, because I get to go into the archives, and it's like going into a museum. Every movie you ever saw – the costumes and all kinds of cool things. I'm walking through, just going, 'Oh, boy! Oh, wow! This is just great!' Then, I walk into the room, and there are the actual 24-track – and the first *Friday the 13th* might've even been done on 16-track 2-inch – really old tapes, which I'm sure that if you just played them would fall apart.

I say, 'What in the world is all this stuff? I'm going to have to get a machine to do all this ...' and then the guys says, 'No, you can't have any of this.' I say, 'Well, then why am I here?' and he says we'll try to figure out something. Then I point at this little plastic suitcase on the table and ask what that is. He says it's the Pro Tools files for all the music. Oh? Hello! Then I went, 'Can I have that?' and he says no.

I was like, 'Well, jolly. What now?' and he says, well, if you come back with a big enough hard drive, we'll copy the six Pro Tools files for you and that would be a chance for you to start putting a CD together. So I made an appointment for the next day, and came back with a couple terabyte hard drive and now I've got sound effects, I've got dialogue – I've got everything on this hard drive.

Then La-La Land comes to me and says they want to put out everything. I say, 'EVERYTHING? It's just film music – some of it's just walking through the woods!'

'No, no: we want to put out everything. Every note that's in the score, we want to put out.' They wanted to put out a six-CD box, and they showed us a couple of ones they had done, like *The X-Files*, and said they wanted to do that with this. Everybody was real excited about it, so between myself and them, we went through all of these Pro Tools files. This fella up in Washington State [James Nelson] did the mastering and made it sound even better than it was.

After that came out, six or seven different labels came up and said they wanted to do the vinyl version of it, and I said that I didn't even know if that was possible. We got in touch with La-La and they said that they only had the digital and CD rights, so it was okay.

I really just liked Waxwork. Kevin said, 'Here's what we want to do', and then, next thing you know, he's sending me artwork, and 'we're gonna have all different kinds of records, like a slimy green, and one with blood in it', and I'm all, 'Wow. These guys are going to make it more of an event, above and beyond just putting out a record'.

We worked out an agreement, and he wants to do all six, so we just took all the materials, and after that, it was pretty easy. I mean, they had to be reprocessed so they worked on vinyl, and I've heard the vinyl. It's actually warmer than the original sound, because it's not digital anymore. It really sounds great, and the thing is, Kevin's just created a package that's really worth having.

NICK SPACEK

Waxwork Records' *FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 2* was released during the summer, with *PART 3* available soon. You can read the full chat with HARRY MANFREDINI as well as an interview with label head Kevin Bergeron online at starburstmagazine.com.

ED FORTUNE BRINGS
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NEWS FROM
THE WORLD OF
GENRE LITERATURE

BRAVE NEW WORDS



Buck Rogers in Copyright Claims

Further development of media featuring famous pulp hero Buck Rogers is under threat due to copyright-related legal action. The hero first appeared in the novel **Armageddon 2419 A.D.** way back in 1928. Buck's creators, Philip Nowlan and John F. Dille, both passed away over sixty years ago, which means the US 'lifetime + 50 years' copyright rule no longer applies. The Dille Family Trust continue to assert copyright claims over the character. Production Company Angryfilms are currently attempting to make a movie based on the **Armageddon 2419 A.D.** book. This has led to legal action between The Dille Family Trust and Angryfilms. We await the results of this whole affair with interest.

Fox Spirit Wins Indie Press Award

Excellent genre publisher Fox Spirit has won the 2015 British Fantasy Award for indie press. In an excellent year for the UK's genre industry, the other winners include **Lightspeed** for Best Anthology and Karla Ortiz for Best Artist. The main prize, Best Fantasy Novel (the Robert Holdstock Award) was won by Frances Hardinge's **Cuckoo Song**. It's an amazing book and a well-deserved win for the criminally under-recognised Hardinge. Juliet E. McKenna took home The Special Award (the Karl Edward Wagner Award).

Angry Robot, Gollancz Want You (Probably)

Submission windows are open, but blink and you may miss them.

Gollancz, the world's oldest imprint of Science Fiction and Fantasy, announced that it would open a submissions window at its recent Gollancz Fest event. The window will be open from January 4th to 22nd, 2016 and they will only consider physical copies of SF, Fantasy, Horror or YA Crossover novels that have not been published previously in any way. More details can be found on their website.

Angry Robot is one of the most well respected producers of genre literature today, with a very high number of critically acclaimed and award winning creators to their credit. They are looking for finished, unpublished, original works of speculative or fantastical fiction which are about 70-150,000 words long. They specifically want novels aimed at an adult audience and are very interested from those who feel that their voice is not usually heard in genre circles. More information can be found on their Open Door page.

Harper Voyager are the genre imprint of Harper Collins, and recently opened a window in early November. Despite very narrow requirements, they received a record breaking volume of books. STARBURST wishes anyone trying to get a publisher this year the very best of luck, and encourages you to keep writing.

Sarah Pinborough to Write **BEHIND HER EYES**

HarperFiction has nabbed the rights to psychological thriller **Behind Her Eyes** by Sarah Pinborough in a six-figure deal. Out in spring 2017, the novel explores whether you can ever truly know someone. Pinborough is a very popular and highly sought-after author, thanks in part to her critically acclaimed novel, **The Death House**. We look forward to reading **Behind Her Eyes**.

Charles Stross Proposes **DISCWORLD** Hugo Nom

Charles Stross, author of the popular horror thriller series **The Laundry**, has pointed out that the entire **Discworld** series is eligible for a Hugo award, as a completed work under the Best Novel category. This is slightly controversial, as a strict reading of the rules suggests that the entire series may not be eligible due to previous **Discworld** novels making it to the ballot in the past. Pratchett's last book, **The Shepherd's Crown**, is certainly eligible for a Hugo and it is a hotly-tipped contender.

Joe Hill's **THE FIREMAN** Previews at Gollancz Fest

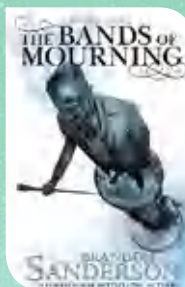
Gollancz released a preview of Joe Hill's latest book at Gollancz Festival in Manchester recently, where fans were treated to a short reading from Hill (and can be still be found via Periscope). Hill said: "It was great to be able to give fans the opportunity to hear and read **The Fireman**". Gollancz Fest was a resounding success, with both the Manchester and London Waterstones crammed with eager genre fans.



STARBURST's own book podcast, **THE BOOKWORM**, is filled with all the latest news, reviews and interviews and can be found on Twitter @radiobookworm

COMING SOON

ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES



THE BANDS OF MOURNING: A MISTBORN NOVEL

AUTHOR: BRANDON SANDERSON
PUBLISHER: TOR BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 28TH

Brandon Sanderson is seemingly unstoppable. The **Mistborn** series continues to stun, surprise and compel his fans to keep reading. The titular Bands of Mourning are the mythical metalminds owned by the Lord Ruler, said to grant anyone who wears them godlike powers. When Waxillium Ladrian is

recruited to investigate, he gets much more than he expected, and uncovers a dangerous conspiracy that could destroy everything.



A GATHERING OF SHADOWS

AUTHOR: V. E. SCHWAB
PUBLISHER: TOR BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 23RD

Schwab returns to his magical take on the City of London, because there aren't enough books about London. Months have passed since the shadow stone fell into the hands of those who should not have it, and it was finally cast into Black London.

Things have almost returned to normal, though our heroes are now dreaming of ominous magical events. As Red London finalises preparations for the Element Games, a sort of magical Olympics, neighbouring countries prepare to strike and the balance could very well tip yet again, plunging the capital into magical darkness.



THE LOST TIME ACCIDENTS: A NOVEL

AUTHOR: JOHN WRAY
PUBLISHER: FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 9TH

John Wray promises to take us on a whistle stop tour of strange new histories, from turn-of-the-century Viennese salons buzzing with rumours about Einstein's radical new theory to the golden age of post-war pulp science fiction. The book will

focus on Waldemar 'Waldy' Tolliver, a man with a haunted past who wakes one morning to discover that he has been removed from the flow of time. Only by facing his past and his future can Waldy return to normality, whatever that is.



THE ART OF MAGIC: THE GATHERING - ZENDIKAR

AUTHOR: JAMES WYATT
PUBLISHER: V12 MEDIA
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 28TH

The tiny cards you get in **Magic: The Gathering**™ simply aren't big enough to display all that lovely artwork. **The Art of Magic: the Gathering: Zendikar** delivers hundreds of pages

of lovely fantasy artwork in a larger format. Better yet, it's Zendikar, one of the game's weirdest and most eye-catching fantasy settings. This lavishly illustrated, hardcover book features the award-winning art of **Magic: The Gathering**, and gives you an insider's look at the secrets of Zendikar - its peoples, continents, and creatures.

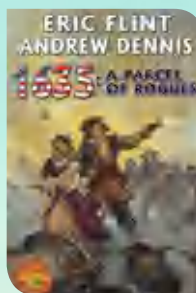


THE ART OF XCOM 2

AUTHOR: GREG FOERTSCH
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 12TH

In **The Art of XCOM 2**, we will get a behind-the-scenes look at the incredible concept art created for the new game and hear from developers and artists about the challenges, secrets, and rewards of creating this landmark series. It will also preview the game's five new classes of resistance fighters and their special weapons. Expect aliens to be at

the bottom of everything. It is XCOM, after all.



1635: A PARCEL OF ROGUES (THE RING OF FIRE)

AUTHOR: ERIC FLINT, ANDREW DENNIS
PUBLISHER: BAEN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 14TH

Cromwell is catnip to fans of alternate reality stories. In **The Ring of Fire**, Cromwell is a rebellious hero, trying to free the United States of Europe from tyranny. When he escapes, King Charles himself demands Cromwell's head. The new chief minister Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, brings over

from Ireland a notorious crew of cutthroats to hunt him down. This sounds like a romp to us; expect crime, history and shenanigans.



DRIVEN

AUTHOR: KELLEY ARMSTRONG, X. DAUMARIE (ILL.)
PUBLISHER: SUBTERRANEAN
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 31ST

Subterranean Press can be relied on to produce gorgeous books that will appeal to fans of already popular series. This Kelley Armstrong novella will feature a number of full-colour illustrations by Xaviere Daumarie. Set in the **Otherworld** series, it focuses on the renegade werewolves,

the Cains. Known for being big, brutish and not-too-bright, the mutt clan embodies all the supernatural world's worst stereotypes. Unfortunately, someone seems to think it's okay to hunt and skin these freakish outcasts. It's up to Alpha Elena Michaels to help them out and get to the bottom of this violent problem. Expect some gorgeous gore.



THE EMPEROR EXPECTS (THE BEAST ARISES)

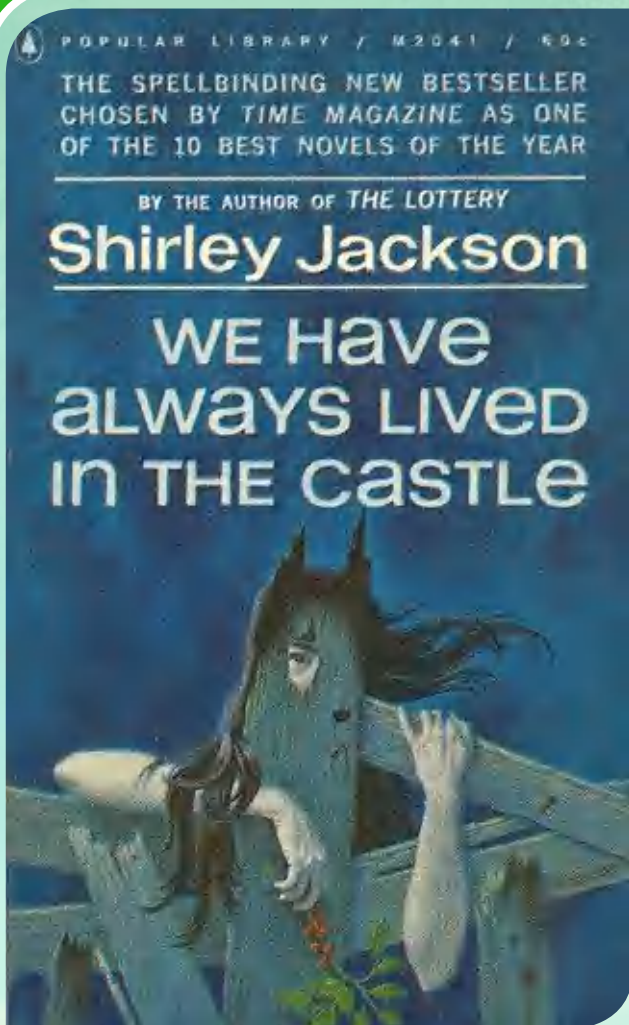
AUTHOR: GAV THORPE
PUBLISHER: GAMES WORKSHOP
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 22ND

It is the thirty-second millennium and the Imperium is at war, yet again. As the greatest ork Waaagh! ever seen threatens to engulf the galaxy, a massive Imperial Navy fleet is assembled. Of course, the forces of Chaos plan to take full advantage of the Emperor's finest

being occupied with a sea of green monsters. Can human courage succeed where the Space Marines have failed? This is part of The Beast Arises series, a multiple author project that, unlike the **Horus Heresy**, will conclude in a timely fashion.

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS

BOOK WORMHOLE



Everyone knows *The Haunting of Hill House*. You've read it in preparation for Halloween, or you've watched one of the adaptations, and it's considered by many to be a horror classic. But it wasn't Shirley Jackson's only novel (there were six), and some would say that it isn't even her most horrifying. Some say that title belongs to *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*.

"My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood," the novel begins. "I am eighteen years old, and I live with my sister Constance. [...]"

Everyone else in my family is dead." And they have been for six years, the result a dinnertime poisoning that killed Merricat's parents and younger brother and aunt. All Merricat has left is her sister and their invalid Uncle Julian, and the house they barely leave. They don't get many visitors. Only Merricat goes to town. They're happy that way until Cousin Charles comes to visit and threatens Merricat's beloved routine. Until he starts pushing Constance back into the world, and she starts to let him. Then, Merricat decides, something

must be done about him.

In the tradition of many good horror stories, this one is completely bloodless. There are no gruesome stabbings or severed heads or *Saw*-like gore, and even the poisoning is always referred to antiseptically. Much like *The Other* or *Misery*, the terror of the novel comes from a sustained feeling of dread - the possibility of what might be. That feeling is rooted in Merricat's narration, which is obsessive, unpredictable, and terrifying, although I think it loses steam as the novel progresses. In the beginning, when Merricat is running her weekly errands, her thoughts are vicious. She imagines the villagers dying in agony and how she'd step happily over them, and she says that she is 'never sorry' for thinking that way; she just wishes that those dreams 'would come true'. When she's with Constance and Julian, these thoughts vanish, but when Charles shows up, I assumed that they would not only resurface but grow more menacing. Admittedly, Merricat *does* think some bad things, but they aren't on the scale of that first chapter, and I think they should have been. Charles threatens Merricat's way of life more than the villagers do, and her thoughts should reflect that.

That issue aside, I do love Merricat's narration, and I wouldn't want to have this story told by any other character. The brilliance of Jackson's writing is that although our perspective is an intimate one, she still allows it to be secretive, and thus scary. There are places that Merricat can't go and things she can't touch, but she never explains why. She often thinks about her dead family, but with very little feeling. She claims to know Constance very well, but it's obvious that she's missing something. Absence is incredibly creepy because it makes you worry. It makes you wonder about

why the characters need it.

Is Merricat's mind protecting her from something? Or are Constance and Julian protecting themselves from Merricat?

Next to Merricat, the biggest presence in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is the past. The dinner that killed the other Blackwoods has permanently altered the lives of the survivors, and they live in that alteration. Julian writes about it. Constance lives in shame and penance. Even the villagers are obsessed with it, making up a nursery rhyme and eagerly listening to the story if they visit the Blackwood house. For six years, Merricat and Julian and Constance have been in stasis; that Merricat likes it - that she revels in it and gets chills at the idea of it changing - is terrifying.

Because then you have to ask: what would she do to keep it that way? Jackson answers that question with Charles, who may be a stranger but is also a herald of the past. He looks and sounds like Merricat's father, and seems to be stepping into his shoes. He encourages Constance's old independence. He starts winding back the clock to the life the Blackwood's had before the poisoning, a life Merricat doesn't want back, and it's then that you see what Merricat will do to maintain her isolation. And what she may have done before.

While I wish that *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* had gone further, completely embracing the terror that we were promised at the beginning of the novel, I still think it's an excellent read. Shirley Jackson has crafted a frightening protagonist who you somehow manage to sympathise with, and a claustrophobic story that sucks you in until the very last page. It may not be your typical horror story, but it's perfect for Halloween and should certainly be called a classic.

REVIEWS

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT - TWILIGHT COMPANY

AUTHOR: ALEXANDER FREED / PUBLISHER: CENTURY BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's no exaggeration to say that Star Wars novels have become quite the minefield of late, as for every promising concept there has been, well, Star Wars: Aftermath. Ever since murdering the Expanded Universe,

Disney has had incredible difficulty finding its footing, but Twilight Company is a definite step in the right direction.

Set during the Galactic Civil War's darkest hours, the Sixty-First Mobile Infantry Company mounts a fighting retreat across multiple worlds. However, as they fall back from one battlefield, Hazram Namir's squad stumbles upon a surprising defector. One who could finally allow them to truly hurt the Empire...

In many respects, Twilight Company can be seen as an examination of the Rebellion. While backed by a solid story, a great deal of the narrative goes into how their forces are structured, how they operate and ultimately the problems of keeping a force of idealists and former criminals trained, fed and equipped. The first five chapters alone paint an extremely varied depiction, going into some surprising detail about their recruitment methods and the problems the Rebellion faces in protecting certain species. There's a surprising streak of realism despite the science fiction setting, and it retains a tone which would better befit a Gaunt's Ghosts novel than a Star Wars tale.

Even among Namir's own unit the reader is given a definite sense that not everyone among the Alliance's military is a hero, and each side is far greyer than they would like to believe. It's

seen as much in the Empire's military as their own, with the book offering some thankfully positive depictions of Stormtroopers and the like.

This said, while offering some fantastic moments, many of the book's elements seem extremely roughly written at times. There's never a sense of solid connection to any battlefield or vibrant description of the setting, and its strongest moments come from the slow attrition of the war rather than from any single furious fire-fight. In its effort to depict the war as a whole, it seems to have missed out many of the individual moments that can make a novel so memorable. The same goes for its characters unfortunately, many of whom seem all too much like archetypes rather than individuals, representing ideas of the Rebellion more than themselves.

It's no X-Wing series, not by a long shot, but this is nevertheless a promising start for a new saga. As a new entry into the setting, it serves as a vibrant look into the lore backed with a solid story, showing the best and worst of both sides in this war. It's easily the best book of the Disney-owned universe so far, so take that for what it's worth.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★☆☆ 6



STAR TREK COSTUMES: FIVE DECADES OF FASHION FROM THE FINAL FRONTIER

AUTHOR: PAULA M BLOCK & TERRY J ERDMANN / PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Certainly more than just a few red shirts, this book covers the onscreen incarnations of Trek from 1966 through to the most recent 2013 film, Star Trek Into Darkness. It's not definitive, but being over 200 pages long shows a good representation of costumes from various uniforms, casual and formal attire, as well as some jewellery, all from an array of periods, ranks, and alien cultures that appeared on our screens over the past five decades.

The pages are generously illustrated with concept sketches, photos of some full-length garments on mannequins and, of course, plenty of beautiful large photographs of the outfits in situ on the show, all making this book wonderful to leaf through. Accompanying the beautiful imagery are quotes from the actors about the experience of wearing the costumes stories from the designers on their inspirations, and we learn about some of the trials and tribulations encountered during the creative process of bringing the fashions to life.

Understandably, there's a weighting towards the 1960s series, and its subsequent six movies with the original cast, which

arguably have the most interesting aesthetic and iconic outfits - without them, perhaps there wouldn't have been as many years of Trek as there has been!

The middle third of the book focuses on the Captain Jean-Luc Picard-fronted Star Trek: The Next Generation series, and its four movies. The rest of the book is split between the other television series: Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, Star Trek: Voyager, Star Trek: Enterprise, and with the two movies so far from the current reboot which began in 2009. The smallest exploration is on the Enterprise series, which is a shame, but with it being a shorter series than most of the other materialisations, and being widely thought of as the least popular of Trek shows, perhaps it is fair.

A fascinating celebration with an abundance of imagery for Trekkies, general sci-fi fans, cosplayers or even fashion designers who want inspiration to... make it sew!

SHAUNA ASKEW

★★★★★★★☆☆ 8



ASYLUM

AUTHOR: WILLIAM SEABROOK
PUBLISHER: DOVER PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In order to appreciate William Seabrook's *Asylum*, a book first published in 1935, it is necessary

to understand a little about the author. Seabrook was at heart an adventurer, but an adventurer keen to explore the darker and, as he saw it, more interesting aspects of human nature. His books covered topics such as Witchcraft, Haitian Voodoo and Devil Worship. He had a lifelong interest in the occult and sought out evidence to prove the validity of such practices, which he later declared not to have found. Seabrook is also credited with introducing the word zombie into popular culture. There is no doubt he was an interesting man but alongside his "academic" obsessions there were also more personal demons; Seabrook was an alcoholic.

In 1933, with the help of some friends, the author had himself committed to

the Bloomingdale Mental Institution near New York and wrote about his seven month tenure there in *Asylum*. Despite the outwardly serious nature of the subject, being the author's life-threatening affliction, the book is a witty read. Seabrook is always candid and honest to a fault when recounting his thoughts and feelings, although he does admit his recollection of certain events to be somewhat cloudy. Behind the anecdotes, though, you get the impression of a frustrated sadness in his words. Seabrook is effusive in his praise of much of the work undertaken by the staff at Bloomingdales, but there is a desperate sense of futility to it. At a time before Alcoholics Anonymous, incarceration was

the only option open to those with a serious drink problem, and although acknowledged as a disease, it was seen as one that could be cured completely. Seabrook was even advised upon release he could now safely drink again. He died just ten years later.

Despite the occasional "did they really just do that?" moments that will make your jaw drop open aghast, *Asylum* is a fun and entertaining read, and one that, like the institution it describes, once you get inside is difficult to get out of. An interesting account of an interesting man's very personal experience.

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★☆☆ 7



VOICES OF THE DAMNED

AUTHOR: BARBIE WILDE
PUBLISHER: SST PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In her first novel, *The Venus Complex*, Barbie Wilde took us vividly into the mind of a sexual psychopath equally obsessed with art and murder. As a follow

up to *The Venus Complex*, this collection of eleven short stories confirms Wilde as a foremost author of erotic horror fiction and is a more-than-worthy successor to that stunning debut. In his foreword to the collection, Fangoria editor Chris Alexander describes Wilde's literary world as one of "sex, death and madness". Boy, he's not kidding.

Wilde kicks off with *Sister Cilice*, which, drawing on the mythos of Clive Barker's *The Hellbound Heart*, reads almost like the backstory of Wilde's own *Female Cenobite* in *Hellraiser II: Hellbound*. *Sister Cilice* is an icon of transgressive female sexuality and Wilde returns to her twice more in the collection, forming the philosophical backbone of the book. Along the way

there are semen-hungry neo-vampires, miracle-performing dime-store preachers, insomniacs visited by demons straight out of Fuselli, a vengeful female fury who trusses up the scrotum of a hapless home invader with plastic ties, and oversexed train-riding Zulu zombies. All delightfully perverse and shot through with Wilde's trademark black humour. Specially written for this collection, *Valeska* stands out (alongside the splatterpunk/medical horror *Polyp*) as the tale ripest for novel-length treatment (Wilde is currently adapting *Zulu Zombies* into a screenplay – can't wait to see that one at the local multiplex), constituting, as it does, a total rethink of vampire mythology.

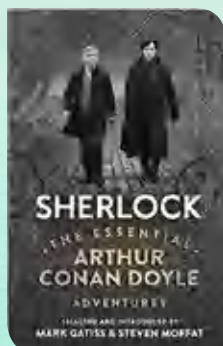
As to be expected with

a collection that spans early publications to more recent work, some tales are more accomplished than others – but when taken as a whole, it's the sheer force of Wilde's vision that impresses most. Wilde's writing reminds us that the unbridled imagination is, in the words of David Cronenberg, "beyond politics, beyond society – a threat to civilisation!"

As filmmakers Jen and Sylvia Soska remark in their afterword, Wilde's stories are like "perverse fever dreams"; illustrated throughout with visionary artwork by Clive Barker, Nick Percival and Daniele Serra, amongst others, *Voices of the Damned* are precisely that.

JON TOWLSON

★★★★★★★☆☆ 9



SHERLOCK: THE ESSENTIAL ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE ADVENTURES

AUTHOR: ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
PUBLISHER: BBC BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We have to ask, is there any point in us reviewing the stories contained within this collection? Many of them are over 100 years old and have been covered so many times before that it seems somewhat redundant for us to really go into the merits of any particular story. Suffice to say that the ones they've picked are the better Sherlock Holmes stories and are quite a good way to introduce new fans.

The book is admittedly pretty well designed; it does a good job of conveying the modern Victoriana that Sherlock does so well, and if you were giving this as a gift it would honestly be a very nice thing to have (it doesn't work as a stocking filler though; even Mycroft's stockings would be

challenged by this tome).

But now we come to the real selling point of the book: each story features an individual introduction by the Sherlock creative duo Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss. However, the issue with this is that the sum total of their contributions runs to around 600 words. We counted. The introductions are there, but if you ask us, any introduction that runs to a mere 14 words is not much of one. Call us crazy but we expected more for £20.

The fact is that this low level of input makes the whole thing come across as one hell of a cynical cash-grab for the Christmas market. Possibly the final nail in the coffin is that BBC Books themselves did this very

thing a few years ago, with a range of books (including longer introductions by Moffat, Gatiss et al.) that contained the complete stories. That collection is still available if you know where to look (and probably cheaper!).

The problem with this book in a nutshell is that dedicated fans will have most likely read all this stuff already, while new fans have so many alternatives (from lavishly illustrated or annotated volumes to the cheap and cheerful editions) as a good gateway to the stories. This, sadly, makes the whole endeavour seem rather pointless.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★☆☆ 4

VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS
MONITOR DUTY
TO BRING YOU THE
LATEST FROM
THE WORLD OF
COMIC BOOKS



I had planned to not report on any further variant covers or artwork releases (there's just so much!) until reading the book itself, but this one is a doozy. Miller himself has produced some new art in anticipation of the story. One depicts Batman, coiled and ready to go, the other, Superman and The Atom. Both are... very modern Frank Miller. Batman appears to be missing a leg and Superman's rather revealing, flexed pose gives new meaning to the word 'Superdickery' (Google it, and laugh).

Talking of super powered dickery, the regular non-DKR version of Batman has finally gotten himself some powers. Or his chair has. The Mobius Chair, to be exact, which has given the Caped Crusader New God omnipotence, as though the character wasn't already written as a massive know-it-all anyway. In addition to leaping through a Boom Tube to chase down Wayne murderer Joe Chill, he'll be using it to take down criminals before they've even committed their crimes (how very *Minority Report*) and learn answers to the questions that elude even the World's Greatest Detective. This, we're promised, will bring him into direct conflict with the Joker – whose identity he also knows for the first time. There's that niggling sense of déjà vu again: it was only recently that we saw Batman and the Joker in their *Endgame*, a status quo changing bit of work from Scott Snyder and Greg Capullo. This time, though, with Geoff Johns and his *Darkseid War*, which we'll see it play out in *Justice League* next year.

Over at Marvel, The Punisher is set to get his ongoing series again with the aptly titled *The Punisher*, written by Becky Cloonan. The story will see Frank investigating a drug that gives its users temporary Super Soldier powers, (presumably) a bit like Batman's *Venom* saga, or Iron Man's *Extremis*, but (also presumably) without all of the exploding. Where the déjà vu kicks in again is that this series will be drawn by Steve Dillon, no stranger to Frank Castle, having illustrated the guy throughout various iterations. If you wanted to be *really* mean, you could make a comment about the case of 'same face' Dillon seems to employ in drawing his characters, but no-one draws The Punisher quite like him (even if he draws everyone else the same) so it's good to have him back! Again.

This one feels like old news, but apparently it's something new: The X-Men's Iceman has come out as gay. The older version of the character (thanks to a bit of timey-wimey wibbly-wobbly, both past and present versions of the X-Men are hanging around together these days), with a little help from his younger self, has de-closeted.

It's always nice, writing this humble column of mine, when the comic book news I report for you lovely readers tends to fit a theme. Sure, I can just regurgitate news and dates and upcoming storylines for you verbatim, but it flows and reads a little better when there's some sort of shape to it. Déjà vu time!

All entertainment tends to be somewhat cyclical – genres become popular, die down for a bit, then return, more in demand than ever. Well, except westerns; try as they might, nobody wants a western (come on *Bone Tomahawk*, make 'em want it again!). Comic books seem to be more cyclical than most,

with audiences always demanding to see their most beloved characters resurrected. It's why Batman or Captain America or Superman or The Human Torch can never stay dead. And so you get months like November where all of those things you're sure you've seen before re-emerge all over again (this time with a superpowered chair and Superman who is a negative coloured version of himself and a bit of an ass).

So with that in mind, it's another month and another excited tease of Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* sequel *The Master Race* (I say excited – your mileage may vary).



There's been a bit of is he/isn't he in recent months, and not a little controversy in having one version of the same character gay and the other potentially *not*, so it's good that Marvel have come out (ha) decisively on the issue (also ha).

Oh, and here's a blast from the past to fear/celebrate. Rob Liefeld is returning to Marvel in 2016. No news on whether he will bring any feet with him, or if it'll be Deadpool-related to tie-in with the movie, also out next year. Rest assured though, it'll be 'killer.'

A bit of newness now, lest we become completely lost in our nostalgia. William Shatner is launching his very own comic book imprint with, um, Stan Lee. We Shat you not, Shatner Singularity will be published with LNL Partners to produce a series of 'Cinematic Graphic Novels,' whatever that means. Excelsior, I guess.

He's not alone, either. Mickey from *Doctor Who*... sorry, Noel Clarke has



written his own comic book for Titan, entitled *The Troop*. Illustrated by Joshua Cassara, the book has a group of 'troubled teenagers' battling dark forces while also discovering that they have 'unbelievable powers' and also, to paraphrase the man himself, 'effing up' all the time. *The Troop* is out from December.

And back to the retro, big time. There's a whole slew of books on the way from Dark Horse (well, they have to replace *Star Wars* somehow) including *Avatar* (the James Cameron one), *How To Train Your Dragon*, and *Buffy: The High School Years*, as though the first three seasons of *Buffy* weren't enough *Buffy At High School* for you. A futuristic version of *Lone Wolf and Cub* (remember them?) has also been announced. More on these as they come in, as well as their inevitable vs. *Predator*/*Aliens*/*Prometheus* crossovers...

And finally, all the way from the 1970s:

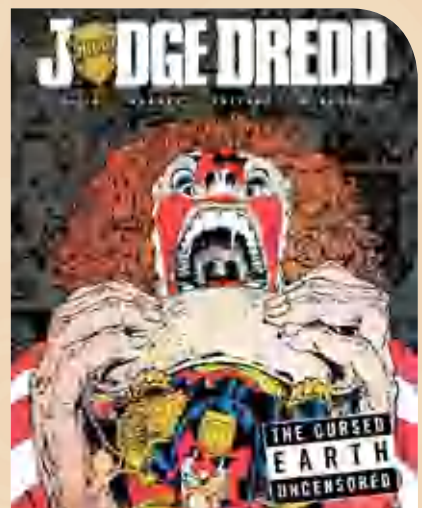


the lost chapters of *The Cursed Earth* are found! Well, re-released, and no longer banned. For the first time since 1978, it has been decreed that its infamous *Burger Wars* chapters can be seen. The two episodes, titled *Burger Wars* and *Soul Food*, will be reprinted by Rebellion thanks to changes in copyright laws relating to satire. Which means that the comic's depictions of the Jolly Green Giant, The Michelin Man, Burger King and Ronald McDonald can finally be seen (again). The story will be published in July in *Judge Dredd: The Cursed Earth Uncensored*. Well out of time for that *Judge Dredd Mega Collection* you've been building up, then.

On that note, we wrap up for another month, accompanied by the same speech about Twitter handles and e-mail addresses we seem to end with every time. Now, after all that fast food natter, who else fancies a burger?!



Joel Harley can be contacted at: joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com and tweeted @joelharley



REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



ANDRE THE GIANT: CLOSER TO HEAVEN

WRITER: BRANDON EASTON / ARTIST: DENIS MEDRI / PUBLISHER: IDW PUBLISHING / RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 26TH

The odds are that most of us only know Andre the Giant from his appearance as Fezzik in *The Princess Bride*, which is still the best fairytale ever committed to film (or in print, for that matter). But Andre the Giant wasn't an actor - at least not in the conventional sense - his tremendous size, the result of a growth disorder caused by a tumour on his pituitary glands, made him one of the biggest stars in pro wrestling. *Andre the Giant: Closer to Heaven* is a beautifully drawn, sensitively written portrait of Andre 'The Giant' Roussimoff's extraordinary life, told in the first person in a voice that sounds uncannily true to the real man.

It follows him from his youngest days, growing up in a French farming community, through his experience of becoming a wrestling star in Japan, to the lure of the US and the formation of what we now know as World Wrestling Entertainment, but was then simply the World Wrestling Federation. In fact, this book tells us almost as much about the WWF and the McMahon dynasty that controls it as it does about Andre and his day-to-day battle with alcohol addiction, his relationship with a daughter he barely knew, and the tremendous physical pain which, in the end, rendered him almost incapable of walking.

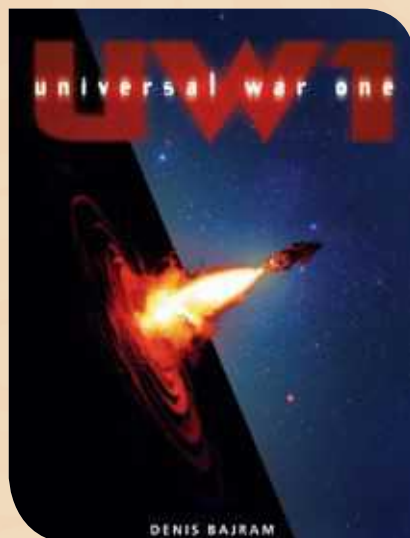
To be honest, we didn't expect to

enjoy this book as much as we did. Denis Medri's artwork has a lot to do with that. While not exactly caricature nor naturalistic, his depictions of Andre and other familiar players in his life-story - Vince McMahon and Hulk Hogan figure especially prominently, with guest appearances from Muhammad Ali and 'Six Million Dollar Man' Lee Majors - are all right on the money, with his backgrounds, country scenes and cityscapes being especially evocative. Writer Brandon Easton and editor Shannon Denton should also be congratulated for taking a rich and complex subject and creating a structure and a script that was always engrossing, constantly fascinating, but never became confused or meandering.

The touching forward from Andre's daughter, who writes about him with warmth and honesty and obviously feels a lot of gratitude for the respect Medri and Easton have shown her father, also makes this book not only very special but also a deeply affectionate tribute to a man who, it seems, was the closest we might ever see to a real life superhero, with all the attendant weaknesses and neuroses the best superheroes share.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★10



UNIVERSAL WAR ONE

WRITER & ARTIST: DENIS BAJRAM / PUBLISHER: TITAN COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Universal War One is a series of six issues by Denis Bajram that is being published in the UK by Titan Comics. This is a French comic book series that ran over several years. However, due to the different publicity standards abroad, the story is actually much bigger than a standard six-issue series in the UK, with a total length that encompasses an epic 400 pages.

Universal War One is known for its epic scale, original storyline and engaging characters, but it is the stunning visuals that really allow the story to be vividly captured in the reader's imagination. The story follows the outbreak of a civil war, just as an unexplainable wall of complete darkness descends on the solar system, completely splitting it in half. This then results in an investigation being carried out, which then leads to the start of the civil war.

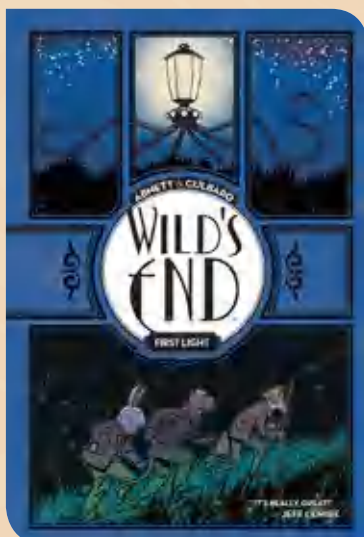
The story can seem complex, but the plot is held together well by the clever dialogue and descriptive imagery. Full of immense battles, clever characters and

a smart plot, this is a graphic novel that is essential reading for any sci-fi fan. The six-issue series being across a vast number of pages really allows the reader to experience a much larger story. Every issue contained in this collection is a stunning work of art.

The graphic novel itself is a beautiful hardback, and it is clear that Titan Comics invested a great amount of time and effort into creating a premium collection for fans of the series. This alone should make it an essential read, but with the sequel, *Universal War Two*, soon going to be released in the UK, readers will definitely find much satisfaction in this collection. Also, with the announcement of a film in the works, *Universal War One* is likely to become a major property over the next few years. A flawless masterpiece and a magnificent collection. Essential.

ANDREW MUSK

★★★★★★★★★★10



WILD'S END: FIRST LIGHT

WRITER: DAN ABNETT / ARTIST: I.N.J. CULBARD / PUBLISHER: BOOM TOWN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Renowned for writing the definitive Guardians of the Galaxy, author Dan Abnett teams up with artist I.N.J. Culbard yet again for BOOM! Studios' latest graphic novel, Wild's End: First Light. Utilising all the tropes of classic sci-fi adventure, Abnett and Culbard inject the genre with an anthropomorphic twist.

Set in the 1930s, the secluded English

village of Lower Crowchurch is utterly unprepared for an alien invasion. Led to safety by war veteran Clive Slipaway, the inhabitants of Crowchurch are faced with the harsh realities of death and the horrifying fact that they're not alone in the universe.

Mixing together the fantastical elements of both The Wind in the Willows and H.G. Wells' The War of the Worlds, Wild's End is a brutal clash of two wholly different genres, and that's why it's such a refreshing read. Aided by Culbard's phenomenal art, BOOM! Studios latest stands as being one of Abnett's finest reads in a while.

The characters, despite being animals, feel authentic and human. Some specific characters match the traits of their animal counterparts, and Abnett manages to infuse the cast with emotion and individuality. For example, a cat named Ms. Peardeew is a bitter writer who is stuck in a creative rut, whilst a particular favourite, Fawkes, is an alcoholic fox shunned by the townsfolk.

Culbard's artwork is faultless in Wild's End, and he perfectly encapsulates the sensibilities of the story. His artwork is a vibrant palette of colours with some superb line work, which manages to contrast between life and death incredibly well. The alien designs, whilst retaining the traditional tripod design, still manage to fit within the 1930s aesthetic and story.

Currently an ongoing series, it will be interesting to see Wild's End's story continue, especially in regards to the final revealing page. Abnett somehow manages to create such a rich and diverse universe so well, and

that's previously been noticed in Guardians of the Galaxy and The New Deadwardians.

If you're after a recommendation this Christmas, look no further than Wild's End. It's an engaging and thoroughly enjoyable experience from start to finish. Unique characters are established and thrown into uncharted territory, providing a concept that hasn't been seen in comics yet. Culbard's artwork is also wonderfully stylistic and simply beautiful, and it truly stands out on the comic book shelves.

MATT WELLS

★★★★★★★★★ 8



DAN DARE: THE 2000 AD YEARS VOL. 1

WRITER: VARIOUS / ARTIST: VARIOUS / PUBLISHER: REBELLION / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When 2000 AD was first released in 1977, it brought along with it one of Britain's most enduring and endearing science fiction characters. Dan Dare was back, but anyone expecting the same hero as seen in Eagle comics was in for a shock. Gone was the stiff-upper-lip spacefarer, rejected in favour of a man who was more than happy to let

his fists do the talking, someone who talked back to those in authority. Like Judge Dredd, Dan Dare captured an aspect of the Dirty Harry attitude that was prevalent at the time. Naturally, there was an uproar. Traditional Dare fans shouted in protest at this revived version, while his new audience – the boy readers 2000 AD was aimed at – adored the exciting no-nonsense approach. This was a new Dan Dare for a new generation.

Thirty-eight years later, publishers Rebellion have gathered Dare's adventures together in a lush hardback volume. As a slice of nostalgia, it's an absolute joy to behold, an adventure story that writers Pat Mills and Gerry Findley-Day ensure keeps rolling like a locomotive. Dan Dare is here to act, to save the planet from aliens, not to pause for introspection; he punches and shoots – even wields a living axe – Drokking and Stomping his way across the galaxy with a ragtag group of misfits for a crew. A product of its time, certainly, but a delight to read.

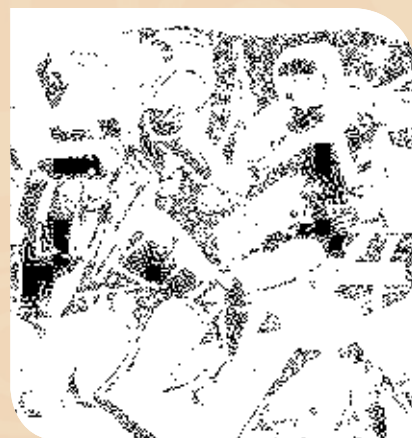
The accompanying artwork is incredible, although the contrast in styles between Belardinelli and Gibbons is vast. The former populates space with creatures out of nightmare, his planetary landscapes a phantasmagoria that the reader can easily become lost in, while the latter has a sharper style, everything more clearly cut, with spaceships and weapons looking like NASA blueprints. Both are superb; although Gibbons is a firm favourite in most cases, his art most suiting the military tone,

Belardinelli's contribution remains a unique vision that cannot be ignored.

This is a great package, one that will have older readers recalling images from their youth, while offering Dan Dare to a further generation of comic-book fans. It feels like it's taken a long time to see these stories back in print, but it has been worth the wait. Who knows, perhaps this will be the stone that causes enough ripples to inspire future creators to bring back Dare once again and prove that, whatever the interpretation, he remains a timeless character.

ALISTER DAVISON

★★★★★★★★★ 9







TARGET WAS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO GO FAR.



I'D RECOGNISE THAT FACE ANYWHERE - RORY BOTTY, FREELANCE HACK. THIS SHOULD BE EASY.



YES, YES, RUN ALL YOU WANT MY OLD SON.

QUITE A THING TO LIVE IN FEAR AIN'T IT - THAT'S WHAT IT IS TO BE A SL



FREEZE SCUM!

EH? WHAT?



YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR IMPERSONATING A MEMBER OF HIS MAJESTY'S WELFARE SQUAD.



THIS IS SOME KIND OF A MISTAKE!

SAD REALLY. STILL THINKS HE'S A BENEFITS OFFICER.

GETTING THE SACK LIKE THAT MUST HAVE SENT HIM BANANAS.



TOO BAD HE WON'T LIVE...



... BUT THEN THESE DAYS...

WHO DOES?

! END

STORY BY: JEREMY BIGGS. ART: BOB LEVINGBIRD. LETTERS: JON SCRIVENS.
WWW.SUBVERSIVECOMICS.COM



ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY ROUND
UP FROM THE
WORLD OF ANIME
AND MANGA WITH
DOMINIC CUTHBERT



Hollywood Tap **TIGER AND BUNNY** for Live-Action Movie

In Hollywood's ongoing quest to scrounge the depths of anime greats, **Tiger and Bunny** is the next on the killing floor. Ron Howard was revealed as producer for Imagine Entertainment at the Sunrise panel at New York Comic Con, with director, writer and cast yet to be unveiled. The 2011 anime, written by Masafumi Nishida with director Keiichi Sato, was a subversive twist on the superhero formula. So, that leaves us with **Ghost in the Shell**, **Akira**, **Battle Angel Alita** and more in the pipeline. Give us strength...

HIMOUTO! UMARU-CHAN Spin-Off Manga Announced

One of the most charming anime of recent seasons was **Himouto! Umaru-chan**, where the archetypal popular girl was, in fact, an anime obsessed, manga reading, junk food munching, video game playing slob. And now Sankaku Head, author of both the manga and anime, is launching a spin-off for Umaru's gawky and kind-hearted friend, Nana Ebina. Titled **Akita Imokko! Ebina-chan**, the new series will begin serialisation on Nico Nico Seiga and other platforms at the end of November.

Studio Trigger Unveil Latest Anime Project

Having been behind such demented masterpieces as **Kill la Kill**, Studio Trigger has unveiled their latest anime project, **Kiznaiver**. Director Hiroshi Kobayashi - who helmed multiple episodes of **Kill la Kill**, among many other series - is making his full TV directorial debut, with Mari Okada penning scripts. Set in the once prosperous futurist city Sugomori, high schooler Katsuhira Agata, who's unable to feel pain, is chosen to join Kiznavier, a group who share pain. No air date has been revealed.



Second Season of **ASSASSINATION CLASSROOM** Gets Airdate

With the tremendous success and snowballing popularity of **Assassination Classroom**, another season of the anime was inevitable, and although a second run was confirmed only months into the first, the date has now been set in stone. A January 2016 airdate has been announced both by the series' official website and Shueisha's Weekly Shōnen Jump magazine, with the main staff and cast returning. No UK broadcast has yet been confirmed.

Studio Manglobe Confirmed as Bankrupt

It's with a heavy heart we bring you news that Tokyo-based production company Manglobe has filed for bankruptcy. After the rumour swirled online, multiple Japanese media outlets confirmed the worst. Founded in 2002, the company is behind titles such as **Samurai Champloo**, **Hayate the Combat Butler!**, and **The World God Only Knows**. Having helmed this year's **Gangsta**, which ended with the most unsatisfying cliff-hanger, we hope another studio will pick up the slack.

BLACK BUTLER Anime Movie Gets Green-Lit

Supernatural Victorian noir with a healthy dose of boy-love has remained a winning formula since the first volume of Yana Toboso's manga. Since then, the anime series has enjoyed critical and commercial success, so it's a wonder that an animated movie has taken this long. Daisuke Ono will reprise his role as demonic butler Sebastian Michaelis, with Maaya Sakamoto once again voicing Earl Ciel Phantomhive. Again, details are sparse, but, as ever, watch this space.

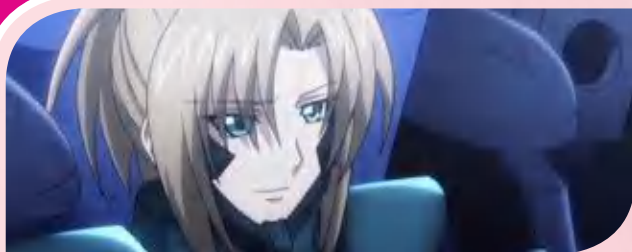
New Anime in Store for **FULL METAL PANIC!**

Announced at the Fantasia Bunko Big Thanksgiving 2015 event, publisher Fujimi Shobo revealed that a new anime adaptation of Shoji Gato and Shikidouji's **Full Metal Panic!** light novel series has already begun production. The military mecha, high school rom-com series was previously adapted in 2002, with a follow-up three years later, and a comedy companion series in between. Little else is known about the project at this stage, but just this titbit has gotten us excited.



THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



MUV-LUV ALTERNATIVE: TOTAL ECLIPSE PART 2

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: MASAOMI ANDO / SCREENPLAY: TAKAYUKI INAGAKI / STARRING: DAISUKE ONO, MAI NAKAHARA, HITOMI NABATAME, MAMIKO NOTO, SAKURA NOGAWA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

What began as a high school dating visual novel morphed into a sci-fi saga packing mecha, aliens, and an alternative world. With Muv-Luv Alternative: Total Eclipse you get a waft of both, in a bait-and-switch, switch-and-bait formula that's more difficult to keep up with than a mech-suit hell-bent for the skyline.

Since the first curve, US test pilot Yuuya Bridges has come to grips with the duality of his heritage, no longer shirking or

shaming his Japanese side. Even less surprising is how he ends up with a little harem on the go, channelling the central function of the source material. Teased from the get go, Yui Takamura was in tsundere mode when it came to Yuuya. Now she's gurning and blushing, and all at the cost of her character. But where Yui wanes, others come to the forefront. Of the vast roster, it's bartender Natalie that develops into an unlikely

audience ally.

For a narrative steeped in alien invasion, the BETA are fairly absent, as if to say that this is the new present and everyone has grown to accept it. Where the aliens have withdrawn, the focus shifts to the political and the bureaucratic machinations behind the front lines, a point best illustrated by the fact the arrival of the BETA put the Cold War on hold, relations between the US and USSR are tenuous at best. Factor in Japan, and it's a volatile trinity. This climate gives way for a band of terrorists (or freedom fighters) and their uprising.

Titled the Refugee Liberation Front, they fight for better treatment and conditions for the Eurasian refugees. It's quite an interesting tangent, and looks at warfare from a humanist perspective. But because of the stark difference between reality and the more light-hearted, ecchi scenes, the two don't quite sit comfortably together.

The CG animation of the

BETA prevents them from being anything but a hulking eyesore, but in the heat of combat, with the blur of mecha and alien action, it's hard to discern or scrutinise – especially with the rolling snare drum and brass section making everything a march. As the English dub opts for the most stereotypical accents for each character's nationality, we suggest that you stick to the Japanese dub.

By balancing and blending all the elements of its source material, the tonal U-turns end up giving you whiplash. This is mirrored in the animation quality, soft edges and hard parts; the beer swilling of the local boozier couldn't be further away from the gruesome shoot-ups. There's a lot of interesting things at play in Muv-Luv, and a lot to get excited about, just not all at once.

Extras: Opening/Closing/Trailers

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★ 6



MAID SAMAI! PART 1

DVD / CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR: HIROAKI SAKURAI / SCREENPLAY: HIRO FUJIIWARA / STARRING: AYUMI FUJIMURA, KANA HANAZAWA, MUTSUHIRO ICHIKI, YŪ KOBAYASHI, NOBUHIRO OKAMOTO / RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 7TH

Seika High School courted a reputation for its rowdy student body, due in no small part to its all-male admission. Even after going co-ed, the men still hold an 80% majority and live up to their feckless behaviour, kept in check only by the school's first female student council president. Donning the reformist's cap, Misaki

Ayuzawa takes on the role with gusto, putting her hard graft and dedication into effect and ruling with an iron fist. Under her hardened façade is a home that's falling steadily into ruin, a kooky, simple-minded sister and an over-cautious mother. To pay her tuition, Misaki works part time at a maid café the next town over, a fact she's desperate

to keep from her underlings.

When she's found out by dreamy heartthrob Takumi Usui, Misaki expects her carefully constructed life to unravel, but far from the expected, Takumi lords the secret over her and becomes a regular at Maid Latte. Good-looking and with grades to match, Takumi is an object of worship for the guys and adoration for the girls. In reality, he's apathetic, roguish and harbouring pervy tendencies with more than a little affection for Misaki. It's this set-up that keeps the central formula ticking over: he comes on strong while she fits neatly into the tsundere archetype, hitting, belittling and insulting him, but stopping every so often for a smooch and some affection. While this central gag is at the heart of every episode, there's different ways of serving up the same scenario.

It's a structure reminiscent of My Love Story!! with the initial dramatic hook quickly resolved, leaving the rest of the

series up for grabs and difficult to pin down. In this instance, it's Misaki going easier on the guys. The real surprises come in one in three episodes, with situations that go above and beyond what was expected, exploring, as it does, stalking, sexual harassment and abuse.

Quietly unusual, Maid Sama! frequently changes tact to keep from going stale, making for an easy to binge-watch 14-episode collection. There's no overarching plot beyond the ebb and flow of Misaki and Takumi's relationship, so episodes can be swapped and switched with little consequence. It plays up the notion of "from the ridiculous to the sublime" with its jump to the hypno-nonsense of the collection closer, but fortunately, the sharp social commentary and pencil shaded backdrops just about make up for that.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★ 7



FLOWERS OF EVIL: COMPLETE COLLECTION

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: HIROSHI NAGAHAMA / SCREENPLAY: AKI ITAMI, SHŪZŌ OSHIMI / STARRING: SHIN'ICHIRO UEDA, MINAMI SASAKI, YURIKO MISHINA, TOKIWA AYA, KINOSHITA AI / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Aside from trying to symbolically 'murder' the reader, Shūzō Oshimi's coming-of-age manga was an avant garde exploration of the perversion and depravity of the human heart and soul. With the caustic subject matter, an anime adaptation was always going to court at least a little controversy. The major problem that fans had on reception, however, was with Hiroshi Nagahama's use of rotoscoping - a process

of animating over live action footage as used by Ralph Bakshi on 1978's *The Lord of the Rings* and *Fire and Ice* from 1983.

Such are the limitations of the technique that the characters are subdued and stilted by awkward movements, and even in the middle distance their faces disappear from screen. And yet it adds to the pervasive oddness and the inherent creepiness of the series. As an experiment it's

both a triumph and a fiasco. Being the first anime to exclusively use rotoscoping, it should be commended, but it's hard not to mourn the drama, or indeed the anime, that could have been.

Set in a grungy town in the Gunma Prefecture, the story follows middle-schooler Takao Kasuga, a bookish oddball who's obsessed with the dark poetry of Charles Baudelaire, particularly the titular collection, *The Flowers of Evil*. Even more than his obsession with poetry is his yearning for schoolmate Nanako Saeki. After witnessing Takeo 'accidentally' stealing Saeki's gym clothes, Sawa Nakamura forces him into a contract. With Nakamura desperate for him to admit to his perversions, Takao is put through the emotional wringer, hungry for Saeki's affection but lost in his own troubled nature. He strikes a pathetic figure, and is by no means relatable, but then none of the characters are. It's this nakedness to storytelling and the ugly realism of its ensemble that make it both a winning and off-putting watch.

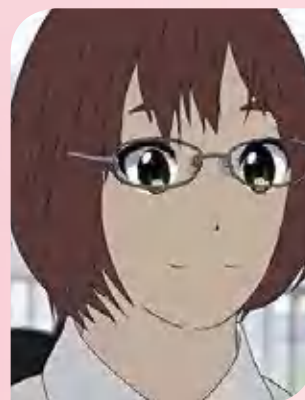
Positioned from an outsider's perspective, there's

a longing and despondency to the lingering shots and the distance it puts itself from the characters. There's a sense of Serial Experiments Lain in the unflinching exploration and the plaintive, slow-burn plotting. Lain does benefit from a richer sense of narrative and has a more rewarding long game; *Flowers of Evil*, in contrast, is a deeply difficult show to enjoy, but as a thematic journey it's a stunning piece of work.

Extras: Credits / Also available

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



NISEKOI: FALSE LOVE SEASON 1 PART 2

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: AKIYUKI SHINBO / SCREENPLAY: FUYASHI TOU / STARRING: YUMI UCHIYAMA, MIKAKO KOMATSU, KANA ASUMI, AYANE SAKURA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As a child, Raku Ichijo made a lover's pledge to his squeeze with a key and locket. Ten years later, he can't so much as remember one discerning feature, and tries to find the key to fit his lock. Being the son of a Yakuza family was bound to throw up problems for the lovelorn fifteen-year-old, not least when Chitoge Kirisaki, the daughter of a rival mob family, transfers to Japan. To save face

and set aside their rivalries, their families force them to masquerade as make-believe lovers, gloriously tapping the tsundere archetype. Not only is Chitoge a candidate with a key and a would-be tale, there's also Kosaki Onodera, Raku's true crush with similar circumstances, and a third girl enters the fray.

As it's from Studio Shaft, *Nisekoi* packs all the typical

trappings albeit with a lighter touch, but there's still plenty of head tilts and wisps of the avant garde. Admittedly, *Madoka Magica* and the *Monogatari* series can seem impenetrable and heavy-handed to new comers, and *Madoka* director Akiyuki Shinbo offers a more gentle entry into one of the most idiosyncratic production studios around.

Based on Naoshi Komi's rom-com manga, the series sets up its central ideal and lets it play itself out as a series of embarrassing encounters and side-splitting visual gags. The second half is more of the same. Straightforward as it may be, the quirky slice-of-life styling and honesty - the gawkiness, insecurity, and obsession of adolescents in love - make it a relatable romp. All the complexities of teenage dating are in tow, and it hasn't gotten any easier. Perhaps it's the quality of the characters themselves that makes the harem aspect of the show seem that much more subversive than some of its counterparts.

Despite the ample suspension of disbelief needed for the set-up, the quality writing

and candid characterisation pulls you in. The rival families do play up to that most classic 'star crossed lovers' story and it's fitting that the series should end itself with a ditsy and affectionate homage to *Romeo and Juliet*. Chucking some of the Shakespearean cliché out the window makes for a rewarding watch for the second half of this predictably impressive series.

Extras: Opening and ending

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



A MONTHLY
FOCUS ON
THE COSTUMED
ROLE-PLAY SCENE AT
FAN CONVENTIONS
AROUND THE WORLD

COSPLAY CATWALK



Photo: Amber Oakenshield / Black Unicorn Photography



Photo: Amber Oakenshield / Black Unicorn Photography



Photo: Niche - Treat Your Geek



Photo: Tricia Bolton / Facet Photography UK



Photo: Tricia Bolton / Facet Photography UK



Photo: AffieFilms

READER'S COSPLAY "PAUL TOKARSKI"

This month, Reader's Cosplay focuses on a familiar face on the northern con scene...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying/crossplaying?
Paul Tokarski: Two years

What is your favourite character to dress as?
Wonder Woman

How long do you normally spend making the costumes?
I don't make them, I buy them from Shop Iconic, though my Mum made the arm part for Batman and the material for Dalek. I go to Europamoda and Heavenly Beauty for massage, waxing and nail varnish for my crossplays.

Are you a cosplayer and want to see your work featured in STARBURST?

Drop us an email at
cosplay@starburstmagazine.com
and we'll print our favourites every month

PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



Alan Tudyk Ditches UNCHARTED 4

A recent interview has revealed that regular genre favourite Alan Tudyk worked briefly on a role in the upcoming **Uncharted 4**, but quit after claiming that he became disillusioned with the direction the game was going in.

The former **Firefly** star commented: "I worked on **Uncharted**, the one that has yet to come out – I was doing a role on that. Really, I hadn't seen Nolan since he and I had recorded years before. I liked it... they... ummm... they fired... ummm... I left, I quit! So, I didn't like it. I mean, I left because they decided to go a different way with it and so when they did that, when they changed leadership, it made my contract null and void and I was able to take that opportunity to walk away which was great because I got the experience of doing it, I made some friends – not with Naughty Dog – but I made some friends with the people that left. Todd Stashwick was in that as well who is in **Con Man** and he did the same thing I did which was 'yeah we're gonna leave now. Y'all are making some weird changes, we're gonna leave'. Sorry Nolan, we left you, we just walked away, we abandoned him."

For those who don't know, Nolan North is the voice of Nathan Drake in the series, but it appears that not even his presence was enough to keep Tudyk on board. The implication seems to be that Tudyk didn't get on with the people at Naughty Dog, and it is interesting to see that there appears to have been some internal backlash against the decision for long-time **Uncharted** writer Amy Hennig to be taken off the series, which resulted in her leaving Naughty Dog altogether.

COMING SOON



LEGO MARVEL'S AVENGERS PLATFORM: MULTIPLE

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 29TH

There are a ton of LEGO games 'fun' packs coming out during January, but Marvel's Avengers looks like the pick of the bunch. If you've ever played a LEGO game before you know what to expect here. If you haven't, they are fun, simplistic and ideal for kids or adults who want to lazily play something that will raise an occasional smile on their face. The LEGO games are still going strong, despite the fact that every other game released this days seems to carry the branding.

EA Expect to Sell 13 Million Units of STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

Following the news that 9 million people signed up to play the **Star Wars: Battlefront** beta in September, EA appear pretty confident that the game is going to be a monster hit. The success of the beta has encouraged the company to up their estimate and they now believe the game will sell 13 million copies before the end of March 2016. That's pretty huge numbers for any developer, so it will be interesting if the game can actually live up to that level of hype.

STREET FIGHTER V Release Date Confirmed

We already know that it's coming and, with any luck, it will be even better than the stellar fourth game in the series. Just to whet your appetite a little more, Capcom have now announced the official release date in a blog post. You should be able to get your hands on the game on February 16th, 2016, assuming all goes well with development.

The game is going to boast a roster of 22 characters on release, with others available as DLC that can also be earned simply by playing the game.

COMING SOON



RESIDENT EVIL ORIGINS COLLECTION PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PS4, PC RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 22ND

The post-Christmas period is always a little slow when it comes to games, as most publishers will have pushed out every big hitter between September and November. This collection is a pretty good example of what we can expect during the month of January. While remastered versions of **Resi 1** and **0** are fairly cool, particularly as **Resident Evil 0** is one of the more underrated games in the series, it's still not an essential purchase. Still, **Resi** fans may want to check it out.

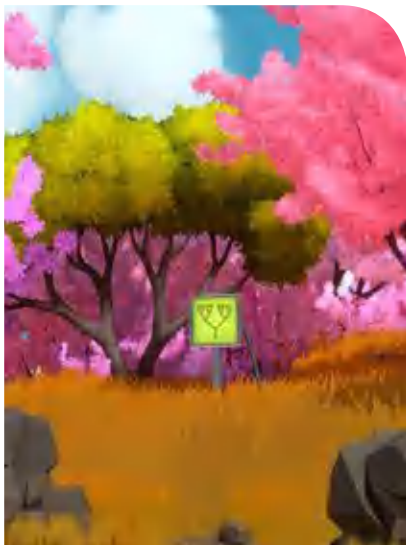
Gun Media Announces FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE GAME

Gun Media's upcoming game **Summer Camp** has been revealed to be **Friday the 13th: The Game**. The game introduces the teen-slasher dynamic to gaming for perhaps the first time, as it is a multiplayer experience where one person controls Jason while the rest control the seven teens who are trying to stop him or escape from him. It also looks set to feature different variations of Jason from the various films, in addition to giving the person controlling him the ability to pull off some of his most famous kills. It's a very interesting premise and one that has us at STARBURST very intrigued. Better yet, the game will feature Kane Hodder, who returns to the franchise in order to reprise his most iconic role. Tom Savini and Harry Manfredini are also on board, which shows that the developers are very serious about getting it right.

Co-creator Wes Keltner commented: "Honestly, who else could we have chosen for the role of the killer? Several people have worn the mask, but in our eyes, there was only one. Kane has the body type, the presence and demeanour that personify the unrelenting, undying killing force we're after for the game."

The game has been funding via Kickstarter, and will have just finished as you read this. At the time of writing, they were three quarters of the way to their goal. A release date of autumn 2016 has been bandied around and the game is being developed for PC, Xbox One and PS4.

COMING SOON



THE WITNESS

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 26TH

First announced alongside the release of the PS4, it's been a long journey for Thekla Inc to bring their first-person indie puzzler to the table, some three years later. With over 80 hours of gameplay promised and lush, stylised graphics, this may well be worth the wait.

COMING SOON



THIS WAR OF MINE: THE LITTLE ONES

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 29TH

2014's *This War of Mine*, based upon the siege of Sarajevo during the Bosnian War, was that rarest of things, a truly original game. Placing the player in the shoes of ordinary Joes (as opposed to some gung-ho super soldier) holed up in a derelict building, it was a brilliant exercise in the hardships of wartime survival. With no truly good answers, just necessary evils and compromise, even winning felt like losing. So to brighten up this grim premise, 11 bit studios have introduced kids into the mix. Good luck telling little Johnny there's no food tonight, and as for his bedtime story? Well that's what's keeping everyone from freezing to death... Not sure this is a release to look forward to, but we expect it to be essential gaming nonetheless.

Refunds Offered For ARKHAM KNIGHT PC Players

If you're one of the unfortunate souls who picked up **Arkham Knight** for the PC, you will probably already be aware that the game is a buggy, glitchy mess that is still yet to work properly for many people.

Warner Bros are more than aware of the issues, but simply haven't been able to rectify them in the time since the game's release. This has led to them taking the bold step of offering refunds to anybody who is unhappy with their copy of the game, with the company making the announcement on the game's Steam page with the following statement: "We are very sorry that many of our customers continue to be unhappy with the PC version of **Batman: Arkham Knight**. We worked hard to get the game to live up to the standard you deserve, but understand that many of you are still experiencing issues."

It's a good move by Warners, but you have to wonder how many times publishers are going to be able to keep pushing out clearly broken titles before they lose the faith of the gaming public altogether.

Are SHENMUE I and II Rereleases Coming?

It seems like the buzz that's surrounding **Shenmue III** is giving the marketers at SEGA a reason to start considering a rerelease of the first two games in the series. At least that appears to be the case if SEGA's European Marketing Director Jon Rooke's comments are anything to go by.

Speaking recently, he said: "Yes, we want to innovate and back smartphones and virtual reality, but our key purpose is to go back to what the brand used to stand for and I think the buzz around **Shenmue III** shows that people love our legacy. Sega was an innovator, the Dreamcast was offering online gaming as early as 1998. But perhaps back then we were pushing boundaries a little too soon. Nowadays we know what we're good at and the strategy is to be more gradual. Over the next few years, we want to use engaging content and marketing to remind the public why they fell in love with Sega in the first place."

It's nice to see somebody maybe thinking about SEGA as something more than the complete shadow of itself that it has become in recent years. Simply put, the Shenmue rereleases have to be a no brainer. Give the visuals a touch of paint and get them on PSN and XBLA. Existing fans will download them, as will all of the people who have heard so much about the games but never had the chance to play.

COMING SOON



FINAL FANTASY EXPLORERS

PLATFORM: 3DS

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 29TH

Explorers harkens back to the early days of the Final Fantasy series, as it uses a job-based system that allows you to develop your characters the way you want to, while placing some limits on them as well. Those who played Crystal Chronicles on the GameCube will feel at home here, as the game follows a similar quest-based structure in addition to asking the player to hunt for crystals. It may not be the sort of Final Fantasy game that many fans are after, but it could well be worth a look.

Sony Scale Back First Party Vita Game Development

We spoke about the ailing Vita last month and how Sony were blaming the rise of the mobile market for the fact that the console has barely managed to sell 5 million in as many years. Now, it looks like Sony themselves are in the process of pulling the plug.

In a recent interview, Sony Computer Entertainment SVP Masayasu Ito stated: "Currently, first-party studios have no titles in development for PS Vita. Since third-parties are working very hard on PS Vita, SCE's own strategy is to focus on PS4, which is a new platform."

Not the most encouraging news for Vita fans, but it can hardly be a surprise considering the success of the PS4 in comparison to the handheld. This must mean that there will be no more AAA titles for the console.

Konami Denying Kojima Has Left

What on earth is going on at Konami? The company are now trying to claim that Hideo Kojima has not left and is simply on vacation instead. We can't tell if this is damage limitation after the **Silent Hills** cancellation and all the nonsense surrounding **The Phantom Pain**, but Konami can't seem to get their act together. Right now it's like watching a loved one slowly spiral downwards every time they release any sort of statement.



Miyamoto Made Odd Suggestions for the Ending of GOLDENEYE 007

Way back during the days of the N64, Rare were actually a good software development company who produced games solely for Nintendo consoles. Of course, this isn't the bastardised version that we know and loathe today.

Back then, they were responsible for the pure slice of FPS heaven that was **Goldeneye 007**. It was one of the most critically acclaimed games of its era. However, if Shigeru Miyamoto had his way it might all have ended up a bit different.

Apparently, the Nintendo maestro was a bit uncomfortable with all of the violence and Rare, being a second-party developer, were inclined to listen to what he had to say.

According to former Rare producer Martin Hollis, Miyamoto gave the team a couple of points that he thought could be adjusted. In Hollis's words: "One point was that there was too much close-up killing - he found it a bit too horrible. I don't think I did anything with that input. The second point was, he felt the game was too tragic, with all the killing. He suggested that it might be nice if, at the end of the game, you got to shake hands with all your enemies in the hospital."

That last one would have been perfect as a joke ending for the game, but we can't imagine people being too happy if they had played through to the end only to shake hands with Alec Trevelyan on top of a satellite before wandering off.

COMING SOON



THE 13TH DOLL

PLATFORM: PC, MAC

RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 2016

This is something of an interesting project, as it is actually a fan game based on The 7th Guest that has received the backing of the original development team. Funded using Kickstarter, the game allows players to explore the Stauf mansion, unveiling the plot and solving tons of puzzles along the way. Details are a little light on the ground, but it should be an interesting game for those who are fans of The 7th Guest. You can still contribute to the game via PayPal at the time of writing as well.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT QUEBEC / PUBLISHER: UBISOFT / PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Syndicate is, for lack of a better expression, just another Assassin's Creed game.

Set in Victorian London, the game follows two Assassins, each with conflicting views trying to bring down a cartel of tyrannical rulers. You go in, counter a lot of stabs, stab some people in return, and enjoy the

scenery. Plot-wise there's really not much else to it, as the game retains some fun characters yet the story events lack impact and gives the antagonists no reason to be so cartoonishly evil.

As with past outings, the major strength here is the setting more than anything else, and the developers utterly nail

old London. Sidestepping the overly grimy look which has been popularised by far too many films, the city feels much more alive than almost any past outing thanks to the inclusion of carriages and ships crossing the Thames. This helps to present a new dynamic, and combined with the new methods of travel (hookshot à la Arkham) it does give the game a little more flavour.

The mission structure is solid, but sadly repetitive and you'll find yourself getting tired of the same sidequests quite quickly, especially conquering territory. It starts out strong but the game is reliant upon it for levelling and it rapidly runs out of steam. It quickly becomes vastly more entertaining to try and recruit and build up your gang, which can thankfully be handled on the fly rather than dragging you away from your intended objective as Brotherhood so often did.

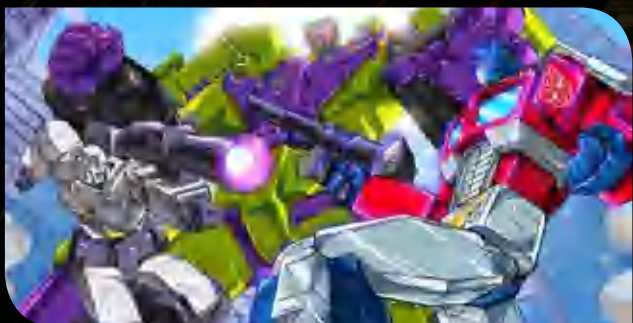
The real problem is that we've done this same song and

dance year after year for almost a decade now. It sticks to the same open world Ubisoft tropes which have been repeated a thousand times, and it's getting very tedious. Combat remains problematic as, while playing out at a much more entertaining pace, counters are instant-win buttons. The few attempts to try new things have been mixed, with poorly handled third person shooting and the game never seems to take into account your own efforts in sidequests. You could conquer the whole of London with your gang and it won't mean a single thing, and the modern day plot is as yawn-worthy as ever.

Syndicate is okay, but ultimately unremarkable. Many ideas have been extremely played out, and it's a vast improvement over Unity but that's really not saying much.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 5



TRANSFORMERS DEVASTATION

DEVELOPER: PLATINUM GAMES / PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION / PLATFORM: PC, PS4, XBOX ONE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Transformers fans stricken with the news that Michael Bay's scrap metal abomination will see several more sequels, welcome to your moment of happiness. Thankfully proving that high quality games can endure past High Moon's creations, Transformers Devastation is a love letter of the best kind. Blending IDW's aesthetics with the original cartoon, it offers an odd mix of third person shooting, rapid brawling and big scale

fighting which never fails to put a grin on your face.

The story is well handled but ultimately an excuse for huge battles. Megatron has a MacGuffin and it's up to a few Autobots to stop him. Boom, cue fighting. Thankfully that's all it needs, as if there's one thing Platinum Games can nail every time it's spectacle fighting. There's been clear effort put into how each character should combat

their foes and their alternate modes work in battle, from Bumblebee's agile blasts to Grimlock's powerhouse style. Give Bayonetta more guns, have combos transformer her into a car (or T-rex) and you've got this game's greatest strengths in a nutshell.

Some of the real fun this time stems from the Diablo-esque loot system, with characters able to carry four items at once to enhance damage or alter their playstyle in some way. Looting and upgrading weapons is never so cumbersome it gets in the way of the fast pacing or becomes a requirement, but pausing to tinker with the fan-servicey weapons never fails to be rewarding. It gives certain sections of the game some surprising replay value, as you're often wanting to get a slightly higher rank or a few more items to hit that much harder. Well, that and to see how lines vary from one Autobot to the next in some of the more story driven environments.

Sadly, the game's Achilles heel is ultimately its repetition. Having so many characters on hand seems fun at first, but you quickly start to see how a wider move-set was divided up between them, resulting in some obvious limitations. It also recycles certain boss battles and ideas a little too often to hold up to scrutiny, and while fun they lack some of the bizarre creativity which made Metal Gear Rising's foes so memorable.

Overall, Transformers Devastation is very much a game of the moment. It's fun to be sure, and seeing giant robots fight one another is as addictive as ever, but its style and repetitive nature means it will lack the staying power of the Cybertron duology. Definitely pick this one up if you're after another fantastic spectacle fighter, but don't expect to be talking about it much in the months to come.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 7

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



MIKAMI MAGIC

Let's try and rocket through this one as quick as possible, shall we?
Fallout 4 isn't going to play itself...

P.N.03 (GameCube, 2003)

Directed by Shinji Mikami (*Devil May Cry*, *Resident Evil*, *Dino Crisis*), *P.N.03* was conceived as one of five unrelated titles that would be released exclusively on the GameCube. The other titles making up the so-called 'Capcom Five' were *Resident Evil 4*, *Viewtiful Joe*, and *Killer 7* (none of which ended up being exclusive to the GameCube at all), and *Dead Phoenix* (which was cancelled before release). *Resident Evil 4* went on to become widely heralded as one of the best videogames of all time, and *Viewtiful Joe* and *Killer 7* are undoubtedly cult favourites in certain circles. *P.N.03* wasn't quite as lucky though, suffering from lacklustre reviews and quickly being overshadowed by more popular titles on more popular systems. We love a forgotten gem round these parts, though, so here's a quick tour of *P.N.*'s ups and downs.

The story is a relatively simple one, with players taking control of Vanessa Z. Schneider, an interplanetary mercenary with the unenviable task of tracking down and destroying a bunch of rogue robots. Running through a series of eleven third-person 3D action adventure

missions, Vanessa will blast away at the various mechs and monsters using powers granted to her by pieces of armour known as Aegis suits, which can be changed and upgraded throughout the course of the game.

Your standard attack is a basic energy beam known as a 'palm shot', fired using the A button. Special attacks come in the form of 'energy drives', powerful projectiles capable of causing major destruction to anything in your path. A combo meter builds up with each successful kill, with higher combos giving greater scores at the end of each level. Points can then be spent on upgrading your current Aegis suit, or maybe purchasing a brand new one with a whole different set of powers and abilities.

It's not quite as simple as 'run around and shoot things', though, as *P.N.03* places quite a strong emphasis on mastering your own rhythm and movement. Enemies are, of course, hostile and you can expect to come under constant fire throughout each mission. Your best chance of survival is to hide behind a wall and wait for an opening, before effortlessly pirouetting or cartwheeling (depending on which button you press) out into the open to fire off

a few shots of your own before ducking back into cover. It might sound needlessly flashy, but there's a certain grace to be found in perfecting your hiding, dodging, dancing and murdering techniques.

So far, so simple, but this is the point where things start to get a bit tricky, as certain other parts of the control scheme manage to feel like a major obstacle that almost threatens to get in the way of the actual game itself. The left thumbstick controls movement, with upgradeable projectile attacks assigned to various button combos on the D-pad, which most of us will also instinctively control using our left thumb. This control scheme has a tendency to feel slightly awkward and unnatural, and it can take quite a while to get your head around how the developers want you to play the game.

There's no 'run and gun' nonsense here - just like in Mikami's most well-known masterpiece *Resident Evil*, you don't have the ability to move and fire, so every action needs to be carefully considered if you want to make it to the end of the level with your major limbs and organs still intact. If something decides to attack you while you're powering up a special move, chances are you're going to get blown to bits and sent back to the beginning of the level. It isn't as unfair as it sounds, though - rather than being an annoyance, the challenging combat goes hand in hand with the movement mechanics to create something really quite special. Complete mastery of the controls and combat leads to an almost Zen-like experience which is rare to find on the GameCube.

Seemingly developed on a super-strict deadline with the aim of making a bit of money for developers Capcom during what had been a rough financial year, *P.N.03*'s other potential downfall comes in the form of some fairly repetitive missions.



It's easy to get the feeling that with a bit more love and attention, this really could have been a ridiculously special game; but ultimately, once you get past the opening couple of stages, the majority of levels start to look and feel very familiar, and on the whole, the game doesn't take too long to complete.

To add a bit of longevity, there are sets of five score attack-style 'trial missions' between levels which are randomly generated using rooms that have already been played through during previous stages. Points earned during these missions are added to your current total, and trials can be replayed as many times as you like before moving on to the next proper stage, so this is by far the best place to rack up some super high scores if you've got your eye on one of the more expensive Aegis suits from the in-game shop. More suits become available on consecutive playthroughs, so you'll need to go through the game more than once if you really want to max out your powers. It seems like a cheap way of adding content, but the repetitive levels and re-used layouts aren't really too noticeable if you play in short bursts rather than trying to plough through the entire game in one sitting.

Overall though, there's plenty to recommend here if you feel able to spend some time getting to grips with the nuances of the combat. Striking (if a touch repetitive) design, a pounding techno soundtrack (which Vanessa herself clearly enjoys, as she starts tapping her foot in time to the music if you leave her alone for more than a couple of seconds), some unexpectedly deep gameplay mechanics, and constant rewards for your efforts in the form of new and improved armour and abilities. It might not be one of the greatest games of all time, but it definitely deserves to be more well-known than it currently is. Fans of Mikami's 2010 blast 'em up *Vanquish* are especially advised to check this one out, as *P.N.03* serves almost as a prototype version of what would ultimately become another underappreciated title. We're not allowed to talk about games until they're 10 years old though, so please join us in 2020 for a *Vanquish* special!

Aaaand, that's your lot for this month. See you again for the end of year retro review in issue 420!



RETRO FIGHTS!

The flamboyant showman, DALTON CASTLE, is quite possibly the most entertaining man in all of pro wrestling at this moment in time. Currently embroiled in a bitter feud with Silas Young (AKA 'The Last Real Man In Professional Wrestling') over access to Dalton's scantily-clad feather-bearing Boys, it'd be understandable if retro gaming wasn't exactly at the top of his agenda right now. Fortunately for us though, we were lucky enough to be granted a brief audience with the Party Peacock himself to discuss memories of games gone by...

STARBURST: What were your earliest gaming memories?

Dalton Castle: Playing *Freeway* on Atari. Also not being able to figure out what I was looking at when playing the game *E.T.*!

Tell us a little about your gaming history...

I had an Atari, then we had the classic NES. A friend left their Sega Genesis at our house so we acquired that for a while. Then a Super NES/Super Game Boy combo was gifted to me. My brother bought an N64 and I loved it. About six years ago, I stole a Sega Dreamcast from Colin Delaney, and then finally I got an Xbox 360 which I still have.

Was there anything you really wanted back then, but didn't have?

I remember wanting a Sega Genesis, but I had friends who had it so I didn't exactly miss out.

What are your all-time favourite games?

The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening (Game Boy), *Mario Kart* (N64), *Star Fox* (N64), *Halo 3* (Xbox 360), *Super Mario World* and *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* (SNES).

Do you have a proudest moment?

The day I beat *Jaws*! I killed that stupid shark with my cartoon boat so hard!

New vs. old - which is better?

New games are amazing, but you really need to invest your time into them. Old games are perfect for zoning out.

Is there anything else to add?

Let the record show I beat *JAWS*!

Fans in the USA can follow Dalton Castle's escapades on *Ring of Honor's* weekly TV show. Anywhere else, head over to Planet Peacock (@theDALTONcastle on Twitter) for more glamorous rough-housing and tomfoolery than you could ever wish for!



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU
THROUGH THE
REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



In case you've been asleep, there's a *Star Wars* movie coming out. I know everyone flips straight to the **Roll for Damage** column to find out more about the world of gaming, but this month's issue is filled with all things *Star Wars*.

Some of you may remember that the movies have prompted loads of board games (we talked about a lot of them way back in #384) but one of things that have been missing is modern-style sweeping strategy board game. Yeah sure, there's *Star Wars Risk*, but that doesn't really count because depending what version you're playing, it's either just *Risk* in a Princess Leia wig or all the action happens on Endor.

What's needed is a huge game with lots of TIE Fighter models, Star Destroyers and maybe even a Death Star that you can use to annex Alderaan. A proper sweeping game that feels like a galactic civil war; one with action, intrigue and loads of components.

Of course, Fantasy Flight Games had the same idea. *Star Wars Rebellion* is a four player game in which you take the role of one of the major players in the *Star Wars* Universe; Emperor Palpatine,

Leia, Mon Mothma, Grand Moff Tarkin, and so on. The aim of the game for the Imperial side is to find the Rebel base and crush it. The Rebels just have to last out long enough to get enough people

on their side and stop the Emperor. It's just been announced, so I haven't had a chance to play it, but to my mind, it resembles the *Game of Thrones* board game; a extensive game of control and intrigue that is filled with atmosphere and ideas. It comes out in 2016, and it doesn't have one Death Star model, it has two. We can't wait.

Speaking of *Star Wars*, I seem to recall promising you all that I would tell you how the *Star Wars: Imperial Assault* campaign was going. Well, I still haven't painted all the really cool *Star Wars* models. We've also run out of campaign from the core box, so we picked up *Star Wars: Imperial Assault - Twin Shadows*. As the name suggests, it's set on Tatooine.

The appeal of *Imperial Assault* is that it's not really an RPG, but not really a table top wargame. It's a miniatures and map driven game with some RPG elements, with most players getting to be the Rebels and one player being all of the Imperial Forces. The expansion has map tiles for the Mos Eisley Cantina and the bridge of an Imperial Star Destroyer. It's also a really cool little adventure. R2-D2, C-3PO, and Han Solo have gone missing and it's up to the players to find them.

Although the scenario features Boba Fett (this is not a spoiler, he's on the front of the box), the set doesn't come with a Boba figure, or one for Kayn, an elite Stormtrooper who is also in the game. You do get little counters to use instead. (These two characters come sold separately and though I can see



why it's a little annoying, we used entirely inappropriate miniatures instead when playing, which is a bit of a tradition in the STARBURST Secret Thunderdome. But long story short, I now think of Spongebob Squarepants when watching *Return of the Jedi*.) We also get two new heroic rebels (a techie and a new kind of thug for those who don't like Wookiees), as well as some Sand People and more Stormtroopers for the Imperial player to use

It's a Fantasy Flight Game, so let's be honest, it's pretty high quality. The models are lovely, the scenarios are balanced and fun and there's plenty of tension throughout. We blasted through this expansion and then almost immediately started playing the game again with different heroes. Can't wait to see where it goes next!

From one franchise about civil war to another, *Game of Thrones*. There was a time when *A Game of Thrones* was only a novel; a well-loved hit novel that was mostly referred to by its fans as 'A Song of Ice and Fire', but a hit nonetheless. Given the crossover between fantasy book readers and fantasy gamers, it was inevitable that there would be game versions of the books. I'm a big fan of the board game, but I've never really gotten into one of the oddest and most dramatic adaptations of George R. R. Martin's now world famous work, namely the card game, or specifically, the *Game of Thrones Living Card Game*, now in its second edition.

When this game first came out, it was a collectable card game with some excellent mechanics that were marred by balance issues. Collectable card games require you to pick up randomised booster packs of cards to add to your collections, and this means they tend to suffer from balance problems at the best of times. The problems felt quite obvious in *The Game of Thrones* collectible card game. Luckily, Fantasy Flight threw that old model away and replaced it with the *Living Card Game* system. This means you always know what you're buying when it comes to sets of cards. Like board games,



you buy extra add-on sets if you want to expand the game's scope. This makes it fairer for all players, and also makes deck building more fun. In a way, the second edition is the third iteration of the *Game of Thrones* card game. Each version has become smoother, fairer and more balanced, replacing tedious bookkeeping with elegant design. This means the latest version really is quite fun.

The Game of Thrones Living Card Game Second Edition comes in two modes. Joust mode is a two player head to head game, which tends to focus more on the combat, whereas the many player Melee mode requires you to form alliances and watch your back. As such, intrigue is just as important; which is fun because it's a very sneaky game in which everyone is trying to grab the Iron Throne.

Each player picks a house (Stark, Lannister, Greyjoy, etc.) and has two decks. The main set of cards contains all your heroes, weapons, locations and events. The smaller deck contains your plot. Twists in the narrative hopefully



give you more power and wound your opponents. These determine who goes first, how many resources you get, etc. They tend to be themed along the lines of something practical (like building a fort) or something dramatic (like a wedding or a war). You can only play a plot once, or if all your other plots have been played, which means you have to think every round as to what your intentions are.

Oh, you can also play the Nights Watch as a faction. They're very strong but also limited in scope (as you'd expect). One of the joys of this game is that it's so different from faction to faction, and not afraid to run with that.

Each faction fights on four fronts; military, intrigue, power and gold. Run low on any of these things and you become vulnerable. The characters from the books are appropriately themed, so Lannisters tend to have lots of money and be quite good at intrigue. Starks tend to have power and military strength but get beaten up when it comes to intrigue, and so on. There are also 'titles'. These are super powers that you get during play that can give you an edge, though much like the books themselves, it's not always a good idea to grab power too soon. You will make alliances and enemies quickly throughout play (it's best not to get too attached to your allies though).

Because there are so many factions, it does feel like the range is thinly spread. I wanted to make lots of different decks, but felt hampered by the lack of cards, which for a box with over 200 cards in it, was a bit of a surprise. I suspect that the game is marketed mainly at groups and families (who will buy one box for their group) rather than hardcore gamers (who will buy two boxes to create their preferred deck and expect their friends to do the same).

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WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY



NO WALLET, NO MONEY, NO PARTS

As this issue has eloquently shown, **Star Wars** is to movie merchandising what Gandhi is to peace and contemplative thought. The franchise literally changed the way that movies were sold and has spawned generations of merchandise (see our **Star Wars** merchandise feature on page 26) and with **The Force Awakens**, it looks as though the series is only tightening its market force grip. With all the new toys and items **Episode VII** is bringing to a shelf near you, where are you going to store all that holiday money before spending it on the nearest remote controlled BB-8? Well, worry no more, because beltsbucklestees.com has you covered.

Though the site is famous for belts, belt buckles and T-Shirts (natch!), they also offer a great range of wallets and purses and their **Star Wars** range is enough to put the Mos Eisley markets to shame. In the wallet collection is the Boba Fett, Darth Vader, TIE Fighter, Millennium Falcon and Star Wars Movie Poster designs as well as our personal favourite: the Chewbacca-based Rebel Tri-Fold wallet. And as for the purses, we have the Imperial purse (w/chain), Star Wars Poster and Comic Star Wars designed purses available. It is heaven for those looking to find places for their hard earned Republic credits. Plus you'll get extra points come December 17th if you pull out that (box office busting) **Force Awakens** ticket from your **Star Wars** purse/wallet.

BOBA FETT, DARTH VADER, TIE FIGHTER, MILLENNIUM FALCON, MOVIE POSTER AND REBEL TRI-FOLD STAR WARS WALLETS - ALL £15 EACH, ALL AVAILABLE FROM BELTSBUCKLESTEEES.COM

IMPERIAL WITH CHAIN, MOVIE POSTER AND COMIC STAR WARS WALLETS - ALL £15 EACH, ALL AVAILABLE FROM BELTSBUCKLESTEEES.COM



SPECTRETACULAR SOUNDS

By now most of you will have seen **SPECTRE** (see our review on page 84), which has been shooting its way through cinemas nationwide. The franchise continues to have a license to thrill and while the modern day Bond films may not quite go in for laser watches, exploding pens and decapitating magnetised trays anymore, that doesn't mean that the gadgets available from Q aren't still pretty nifty. Yes, it may not be a jetpack or an invisible car, but this official **SPECTRE** Portable Speaker, exclusively available online at shop.007.com, is still cool. USB charged, connectable to Bluetooth and suitable for phone calls, this portable and easy to use device is perfect to accompany you on holiday, or better yet, brilliant for allowing you to go all 007 in your home, with your favourite Bond theme blasting out for background scoring (à la Alan Partridge).

SPECTRE PORTABLE SPEAKER - £38.48
AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY FROM SHOP.007.COM

HE CAME, HE SAW, HE PUT US OFF OUR BEEF

In the time between issues, we find out about many great news stories and see many new movies and shows but the one thing we never want to hear about is the passing of an individual. This has been one rough year for horror with the deaths of Christopher Lee, Betsy Palmer and Wes Craven, among many others, and now the great Gunnar Hansen joins this tragic list. Most famous for portraying Leatherface in Tobe Hooper's original horror masterpiece **The Texas Chain Saw Massacre**, Hansen was a passionate actor and author and will be sadly missed by many horror fans the world over. So in celebration of the man himself, we came across this brilliant Leatherface shirt at ripleysclothing.co.uk. R.I.P. Gunnar Hansen, thanks for scaring us witless and may you continue spinning that chainsaw forever more.

THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE LEATHERFACE T-SHIRT- £13.99
AVAILABLE FROM RIPLEYSCLOTHING.CO.UK



DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH JASON!

Earlier this month, people avoided walking under ladders or breaking mirrors, as we celebrated, or rather worried about, Friday the 13th. We came out unscathed luckily; in fact, we came out of the dreaded date very well, as we came across this brilliant marriage of slasher and gaming love. This specially created PS4 Controller is decorated with and inspired by the design of the hockey mask-clad killer Jason Voorhees from the **Friday the 13th** franchise. The controller is one of many awesome designs by Dominico FX and you can pick one up via his official page on eBay.co.uk or contact the creator through Facebook. No self-respecting franchise fan and gamer could possibly turn this one down. Hacking 'n' slashing hasn't looked this cool since Mrs. Voorhees did it in a cosy blue sweater!

PLAYSTATION 4 DUALSHOCK 4 CONTROLLER- JASON VOORHEES EDITION - £90.00
AVAILABLE FROM EBAY.CO.UK



STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE



WORDS: ANDREW KEATES

On a foggy, starless evening we found ourselves approaching London's magnificent Royal Albert Hall. As we orbited the familiar gates of one of the world's greatest performance venues, our eyes were drawn to one or two redshirts having a cigarette before they collected their tickets for *Star Trek: The Ultimate Voyage*. We wondered if we were about to embark on an ill-fated away mission as befitted their destiny. But as we surveyed the not so alien landscape of Kensington, we didn't need a tricorder to see we weren't surrounded by the type of *Star Trek* fan that William Shatner may have once told to "get a life!", but instead, a diverse collective of every walk of life with a passion and love for the music of *Star Trek*. Every now and then in the bars and box office, you couldn't help smile hearing elderly men whistling the theme from *Amok Time* (brilliantly performed later that evening) or middle-aged women la la la-ing the Reliant battle motifs from *Star Trek II* (sadly absent from the set list). This wasn't a geek fest, instead we were in a citadel for music lovers and as this evening would prove, how could anyone not appreciate the music of *Star Trek*?

Presented by CineConcerts, the evening warped through 50 years of well-chosen pieces of music composed for the *Star Trek* franchise, under the baton of conductor Justin Freer (CineConcerts founder and president), special guest composers Jay Chattaway and Ron Jones, and played to perfection by London Philharmonic Orchestra with several superb international guest players. Many would appall the likes of Jerry Goldsmith, Dennis McCarthy, Leonard Rosenman, and Michael Giacchino as great composers of *Star Trek* and we feel it important to make a special mention to the late, great James Horner, who sadly passed away earlier this year. But, we're sure none of these fine composers could have faulted the exceptional creative skill of everyone who brought both acts of this sensational music to life.

From the moment the orchestra began to tune up, we knew we were going to be treated to an interstellar evening of sci-fi polyphony. Flutes trilled, trombones boomed, those familiar French horns came to life and finally the strings warmed around us in harmony with the entire orchestra ready for our epic voyage to the next musical frontier.

In one evening we were treated to a stellar setlist of twenty-nine pieces of

music compiled from five series, twelve movies and even Ron Jones' *Opening* from the first computer game to use a full orchestra, *Starfleet Academy*.

As each piece was played, an enormous 40ft screen would beam high definition montages from the history of *Star Trek*. The montages were occasionally affecting, particularly showing William Shatner climbing a cliff-face in *Star Trek V* juxtaposed with Chris Pine doing the same in the latest reboot played to *Enterprise* from *ST: The Motion Picture*. Sometimes we wished that the montages did not keep the booming sounds of starships passing or actors speaking during the numbers, as it would prove very distracting. We also wish the content was more relevant. It was irritating hearing the *Deep Space Nine* theme played whilst watching clips of *Voyager*. It didn't seem right nor appropriate. A particularly moving montage entitled *2 B Human* concentrated on Data and Spock, which with the recent death of Leonard Nimoy was particularly heartfelt whilst underscored to the magical *Ba'Ku Theme* from *ST:Insurrection*. Indeed, Nimoy was the last image we saw at the end of the performance, too. A beautiful touch. With so much of this music composed either for him as an actor or director, we found by the end of the evening the whole event had felt like it had been geared for us all to pay our respects and goodbyes to the great actor.

The least successful concept of the evening was between musical numbers, the screen would become a slow warping star field that would turn to different hideous shades of colour. Whilst watching this bad screensaver effect, we had no option but to listen to narration (who we believe to be by Michael Dorn, however he was not credited in the programme). These segments would be filled with contrived, over-egged aspirational speeches attempting to inspire us to believe in our dreams to captain the

Enterprise and other such nonsense. There were some very heavy eye-rolls from the stalls. Each moment was written like a cheap *Star Trek* Christmas card, possibly made worse by the comparison of the breathtaking performances we had been enjoying compared to the speeches which would make an *Enterprise* script seem like Shakespeare in comparison.

The screen worked best of all when the producers decided to take a vignette of an episode or film and, instead of trying to cobble together contrived montages, allowed full moments to play out and give us a new dimension that we had certainly never experienced before on this scale, where we concentrated on the music and orchestra first and the action and dialogue second. This was brought to stunning dramatic life during Kirk's "Risk is our business" speech from the Original Series, Sisco's epilogue at the end of *In the Pale Moonlight* (DS9) and Janeway's decision to stay about the doomed *Voyager* in *Year of Hell* (*Voyager*).

But the highlight of the evening was to have composer Jay Chattaway invited to the stage and play his suite from *The Inner Light*. To hear the entire piece played live by LPO, conducted by the great man who composed - what this writer feels - *Star Trek's* most defining composition, orchestrated for a unique, haunting penny whistle to soar above and beyond the shifting, ever evolving currents of strings, piano and brass from major to minor; harmony and discord; The perfect metaphor for the music and ideals of *Star Trek* and indeed, this unique *Star Trek* experience. Set phasers to stunning and open hailing frequencies to book should it come around again.

STAR TREK: THE ULTIMATE VOYAGE begins a US and Canadian tour in January, see startrekultimatevoyage.com for details.



PAUL MOUNT'S



This month, we take an early visit to Season Six of THE WALKING DEAD, pop into Sky 1's ZOO (forgetting to take our packed lunch), and catch up with some new and recently-screened offerings in Viewing Notes...

One of the things that keeps this column exciting to write (if not necessarily to read) are those occasions when I just have to tear up the rule book, go right back to square one and entirely rethink not only the column but also my opinion. This month is a case in point. What was going to be a jolly, unexceptional canter through a handful of shows which have passed my time affably enough over the last few months (plus the new Viewing Notes subsection, which will 'round up' shows there's just not yet been time to cover in depth – you may have noticed there's a lot of genre material around these days and even I need to sleep some time – or just provide a sort of 'in progress'

snapshot of longer-running shows as they play out their latest seasons). Then **The Walking Dead** came back for its sixth season and suddenly everything changed; there was no way I was going to be able to let the first four episodes of this frankly extraordinary new season go by unremarked for long – and I'm quite conscious of the fact that by the time you get to read this column the series will be approaching its pesky mid-season break and it might all have gone to pot. But on the basis of the first four episodes, I think that's highly unlikely and even if it does, the sheer bloody *astoundingness* (note to self: check that's a word) of these first episodes is still something to celebrate.

I was squarely in the 'I think **Walking**

Dead is going off the boil' camp towards the end of Season Five. It seemed to be going round and round in circles; characters were acting irrationally, the zombie-slashing mayhem was getting a bit predictable and it was all getting a bit too relentlessly grim and joyless: just watching it was starting to become a slog. The group's arrival at the apparently idyllic Alexandria perked things up towards the end of the season, but I couldn't shake off the feeling that we'd probably seen the best of the series on TV and that the show was embarking on the long slow stroll downhill.

Then along rolled Season Six and... well, as they say, all bets are off. The show has exploded back onto our screens with three quite incredible episodes and an intriguing (if slightly frustrating) fourth that have reinvented and redefined the series; it's as if Robert Kirkman, Greg Nicotero, Scott Gimple, and the show's umpteen other producers and executive producers realised that the series was becoming a bit pedestrian and decided to stick a bomb under it as it drifted into televisual middle age. They effectively decided to reinvent the show, change the way it tells its stories and – in Episode Three especially – remind audiences that Absolutely No-One in this show is off-limits; *anyone* – however beloved they might be in the fan community – can be on the receiving end of some very special zombie attention at any time. They've shaken the show out of its torpor and made it vital and essential and kick ass again. After a magnificently thrilling opening episode in which Rick and co. try to round up and head off an enormous herd of zombies, Episode Two initially presented itself as a slower-paced character piece back at Alexandria... until the kill-crazy Wolves attacked en masse and – literally – began slaughtering, eviscerating, and dismembering everyone in sight. Then along came Episode Three, fifty minutes of such tense television I genuinely had to turn it off, make myself a brew, terrorise the cat and generally



THE WALKING DEAD



THE WALKING DEAD

reset my jagged equilibrium before I could plunge back into the second half. And what a second half! The wheels have come off Rick's scheme (thanks to events depicted in Episode Two - this is how you do proper non-linear storytelling, Mr Moffat!), the walkers are shambling about all over the place and a splinter group of Rick's posse have made their way to a derelict town to find some transport to get them back to Alexandria. Here's where the show delivers its first spectacular 'WTF?' moment of the season - spoilers ahead! - as series regular Glenn (Steven Yeun) appears to bite the dust and get ripped into chunks during a failed attempt to escape from a zombie horde with the weak-willed Nicholas, who's been nothing but trouble for Glenn in the past.

Please note, Zoners, I have carefully pointed out that Glenn 'appears' to have been killed. This is the frustration of writing about a show so early into its run - I tend to avoid passing judgement until I've seen either a whole series or enough to get the proper measure of it - and I'm aware I run the risk of looking like a proper Katie Hopkins (other vile people are available for comparison) if the show has double-bluffed us and the boy Glen has somehow miraculously escaped from being torn to shreds. The Internet is crawling with fan theories explaining how Glenn may have escaped; if you've seen the episode, you'll understand the suggestion that Glenn crawled under a dumpster, that the blood and clothes-rendering was the unfortunate Nicholas,

whose body fell on top of Glenn's, that Peter Pan arrived and whisked Glenn off to Never Never Land (I'm sure I've seen that one somewhere). The show's producers have hinted that Glenn's story isn't necessarily over and I've been directed to online photos taken during the filming of later episodes where Glenn appears to be alive and kicking. But I'm here to tell you that I really *really* want Glenn to be dead... Let me explain why...

The Walking Dead is an extreme fantasy show, of course, and any resemblance to real life and real people is and should be entirely coincidental. It's a situation that could never happen; it's heightened reality. But the show has, generally, walked a fine line in maintaining its own truth and it's never tried to pull the wool over its audiences' eyes; it's never shied away from the awful believability (in its own fictionalised world) of the terrible things people can do to one another in terrible situations and, as I know I've stated in the past, 'the walking dead' are the survivors as much as the undead. The list of 'those we've lost' in **The Walking Dead** is formidable: Shane, Lori, Merle, Herschel, Andrea, Amy, Dale, Beth... even bad-ass bastard baddie The Governor got what was coming to him. Dead means dead in **The Walking Dead** (well, apart from that pesky coming-back-to-life-as-a-walker business). Glenn surviving what is clearly - *clearly* - an impossible situation with some convenient 'he rolled out of the way' explanation would not only be a massive betrayal of the show's carefully-established ethos but also a ghastly cop-out purely to keep a popular character alive a bit longer (he's already long since bitten the dust in the comic). By the time you read this column, we'll possibly all know the truth; inevitably,

VIEWING NOTES



Two episodes in, and ITV's **Jekyll and Hyde** is proving to be rattling, stylish fun. It's quite bonkers and Richard E. Grant seems to be aiming his over-the-top performances as MIO's Sir Robert Bulstrode at an entirely different - and not entirely serious - show. ITV, who oddly made such a huge play of finding their own returnable family fantasy drama, have scuppered its initial

chances by throwing it away in a silly early evening Sunday night slot - but then it's hard to think where else it could go with so much singing and dancing sprawling all over the weekend schedules like great light entertainment dinosaurs. **Jekyll and Hyde** is strong stuff and without sounding like Mr Disgusted of South Wales, it's clearly not suitable for the timeslot it's found itself in.

Despite an appalling trailer a few months ago, which suggested an unholy cross between **Sex and the City** and **Ugly Betty**, ABC's **Supergirl** has got off to a rousing start in its pilot episode - and the US ratings were pretty super-powered too. A few lumps and bumps to iron out, maybe, but this could be a worthy addition to a TV schedule already packed to the rafters with costumed comic book crime-fighters.

ITV's spooky three-part supernatural thriller **Midwinter of the Spirit** saw a welcome return to ITV for Stephen (Ghostwatch, Afterlife) Volk in the first of what was clearly intended to be a series of thrillers based on Phil Rickman's **Merrily Watkins** novels. Shame viewing figures stayed below two million for its three-



week run as this was a tense, sharp and take-no-prisoners shocker with a great cast - David Threlfall and Anna Maxwell Martin - which deserved to do better. Seems we must look elsewhere for the next big thing in UK TV fantasy...



ZOO

Episode Four offered no answers, a brave and engrossing flashback episode focussing instead on Morgan (Lennie James), it succeeded on keeping us all on tenterhooks, making time until we get back into the extraordinary melee the new season has thrown us and our heroes into. But much as I found Glenn cheery, affable, and reliable and one of the real good guys of the show, I really hope Glenn's dead – because if he isn't and the writers have found some way, however plausible, to get him out of this one, I think the show will have thrown away its integrity *forever* for the sake of a few cheap thrills and to put the wobblers on a creaking British genre TV critic. Glenn's dead; he *has* to be. He *must* be. And look, I haven't even mentioned Rick's dilemma at the end of Episode Three; trapped in a damn-this-thing-won't-start RV, slowly being surrounded by walkers, a look of absolute desperation and defeat on his 'you-used-to-be-in-**This Life**' face...

I make no apologies for raving at length this month about a handful of episodes of **The Walking Dead**, but Season Six has got me seriously pumped up again about a show I was convinced had passed its peak; I love it when a show reinvents and reinvigorates itself because it so rarely happens. But what happens next may be crucial in whether the show has finally... wait for it... jumped the shark or whether there's life in this undead dog yet. Glenn's dead. By the way, I notice that the show's production designer is named Grace Walker. Well, it made me chuckle...

ZOO

I'm the first to admit that I'm a perverse old goat. No, I said *perverse*, officer... All the hip young cats are larging it with the likes of **Game of Thrones**, **American Horror Story** (sorry, not being fooled again this year), **Mr Robot**, and **The Man in the High Castle** and feeling all zeitgeisty and modern. Me? Well, I've found myself hooked on some real hokum; not for me sprawling fantasy sagas and post-modern sociological computer-age satire. I've been watching

Zoo (Sky 1, UK), about what might happen if animals turned on humans. Rampaging lions and bears, tides of rats, cats and dogs living together (I may have mixed that one up with something else); lovely big budget Sunday night hogwash, every minute of it – and yet huge undemanding fun and, before you howl at me to surrender my keys to the **TV Zone** and banish me to a lifetime watching reruns of **Citizen Khan** (oh, the humanity!), let me tell you that **Zoo** has already done well enough in the US to earn a second season next year, so a big fat raspberry to you if you missed it because you thought it sounded silly...

Although, to be fair, **Zoo** was, in fact, extremely silly. Based on a silly book by James Patterson and some other geezer that was too silly even for me to read [*that's enough 'silly' – Ed*] **Zoo** was a big, rattling, globetrotting yarn that combined scenes of mild animal peril with a sledgehammer-uns subtle message about the dangers of huge pharmaceutical companies getting their nasty chemicals in places they don't belong (in **Zoo**'s case, into the animal food chain). Imagine what might happen if some random 'mother cell' found its way into animal DNA and started – gasp – mutating it. What if animals suddenly decided we were the bad guys after years of hunting, ill-treatment, and eating?

It all sounds a hoot and some of it is. There are some genuinely well-realised set-ups of animals turning the tables on us: looming lions, a bear rampaging around a French woman's kitchen, bats going crazy in Rio, swarms of rats, cats behaving inexplicably (so what's new?). But the story has neutered (geddit?) its core concept by fudging the idea of animals deciding to turn on mankind and pushing the responsibility onto some corrupt multi-national chemical conglomerate. Inevitably, as the weeks wear on, **Zoo** becomes a lavish adventure series, throwing in a team of hastily thrown-together heroes (they all have slightly tedious soap opera back stories and dilemmas) as they try to keep one step ahead of the Reiden Global biotechnology company

ALSO SCREENING



ELEMENTARY (SEASON FOUR)

The American envisaging of Sherlock Holmes starring Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu returns with the first episode promising an appearance from the great detective's father, Morland (John Noble).

From November 19th on Sky Living

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

Based on the Philip K. Dick story, you can read more about this eagerly-awaited alt-history show on page 70.

From November 20th on Amazon Prime

JESSICA JONES

The next of the Marvel small screen series (following the superb **Daredevil**) that will eventually culminate in **The Defenders**.

From November 20th on Netflix

and blow the gaff on its activities, all the while dodging outbreaks of animal savagery wherever they go. And they go to some places. This bunch (the cast includes Billy Burke, last seen in the ridiculous **Revolution**, **Dracula/Enders Game's** Nonso Anozie, **House of Cards'** Kristen Connolly, French actor Nora Arnezeder and **Mad Men's** James Wolk) seriously leap about the world racking up the air miles; in the space of any one episode, they can find themselves in two or three locations, apparently within minutes, chasing after another clue or being trapped by another animal. Towards the end of the season, **Zoo** loses its bite as it stretches its plot and its story to breaking point – I have no idea how they'll drag this out into a second season – but as big, fun, dumb, colourful adventure shows go, **Zoo**'ll do for another year or two. Poet, didn't know it, etc...

Contact me via the magic of email at paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thing @PMount

it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE



S.P.E.C.T.R.E. 1965

WARNING: SPECTRE SPOILERS AHEAD

Whilst it might seem that the much needed continuity, character development, and ongoing story arcs were introduced with the **Casino Royale** reboot that began the Daniel Craig era, in fact those elements were initially all present and correct during the early Sean Connery Bond movies. In fact, the Bond franchise was quite groundbreaking in its attempt to bring an ongoing saga to the big screen. More so than the Ian Fleming source novels.

Way back in 1962, an ongoing narrative in a series of films was virtually unheard of. Sequels themselves were thin on the ground, and even managing to maintain the same lead actors in any series of movies was tough going. Yet Broccoli and Saltzman decided to develop the Bond movies into an ongoing saga, and without knowing how long the series might run, they decided from the outset that Bond would not just be facing random villains. There would be a story arc involving an organisation that would tax James Bond to his limits, rewarding fans who stuck with the films with the possibility that the mysterious mastermind would one day be revealed!

Whereas the novels initially pitted Bond against the soviet run SMERSH (*death to spies*), Eon decided that S.P.E.C.T.R.E. was far less political, and could include bad guys from all over the globe. This also allowed his *Moriarty*, Ernst Stavro Blofeld, to be in the mix as Number One; the character that would later on in the novels murder his wife, widely regarded as the most significant event in the whole series. The saga of SPECTRE took place in the Fleming novels **Thunderball**, **On Her Majesty's Secret Service**, and **You Only Live Twice**. As a trio of books they held together quite tightly as a tragic tale of revenge. Bond thwarts Blofeld in his attempt to blackmail the world with nuclear weapons and in retaliation Blofeld kills the only woman Bond had ever made the ultimate commitment to. Bond literally goes off the rails and is consumed by revenge. A revenge so traumatic that Bond literally loses his mind. It was the ultimate James Bond story. An epic three book opus that Eon Productions were wise to use as a basis for their cinematic version of the character's mythology.

The ongoing continuity of the cinematic James Bond was established in **Dr. No** (1962), and would remain reasonably tight and consistent until some rot set in when Connery first left after **You Only Live Twice** (1967). **Dr. No** introduced most of the

tropes and characters that were to become iconic. Bond, with his affinity for casinos, smoking, and womanising is addressed within the opening moments. We are then introduced to M and Miss Money Penny played respectively by Bernard Lee and Lois Maxwell, both of whom would remain in these roles despite numerous changes in the lead actor. Along with the excellent Desmond Llewelyn as Q, who would be introduced in the next instalment, these actors helped to foster a strong sense of continuity. At the time, managing to keep a supporting cast together for so long was virtually unheard of.

It is the moment when James Bond finally comes face to face with seemingly the main villain himself (played to perfection by Joseph Wiseman) that Eon revealed their intention to make a significant change in order to form a linking narrative between **Dr. No** and any subsequent movies to come after. The good doctor reveals that he is actually working for SPECTRE. It was then clear that a larger plot of global dominance would be an ongoing feature over the course of the next movies. The original running order was to be **Dr. No**, **From Russia with Love**, **Goldfinger**, **Thunderball**, and to end with the mythos-shattering **On Her Majesty's Secret Service**. Obviously, had Connery been up for another, then revenge could

be on the menu with **You Only Live Twice**. Blofeld and SPECTRE were in this for the long haul, with Blofeld played mostly in facially obscured shots by Anthony Dawson, and voiced by the sinisterly exotic tones of Eric Pohlmann. Giving a real sense of familiarity to an audience that otherwise would have merely seen another new villain pop up each movie merely to be dispatched before the end titles. The sense that these early Bond movies were building to a much bigger payoff really helped to not only keep but to grow the audience around the world. There was even a plan to have a steady girl at home for James in the form of Sylvia Trench, played by Eunice Gayson and dubbed by Nikki van der Zyl (trivia note: you can hear Gayson's own voice in the original **Dr. No** trailer on YouTube – presenting you with an entirely different take on the character). She was yet another attempt to build a familiar entourage around Bond.

Sure enough, the follow up to **Dr. No** embraced the fact that it was a sequel. **From Russia with Love** is

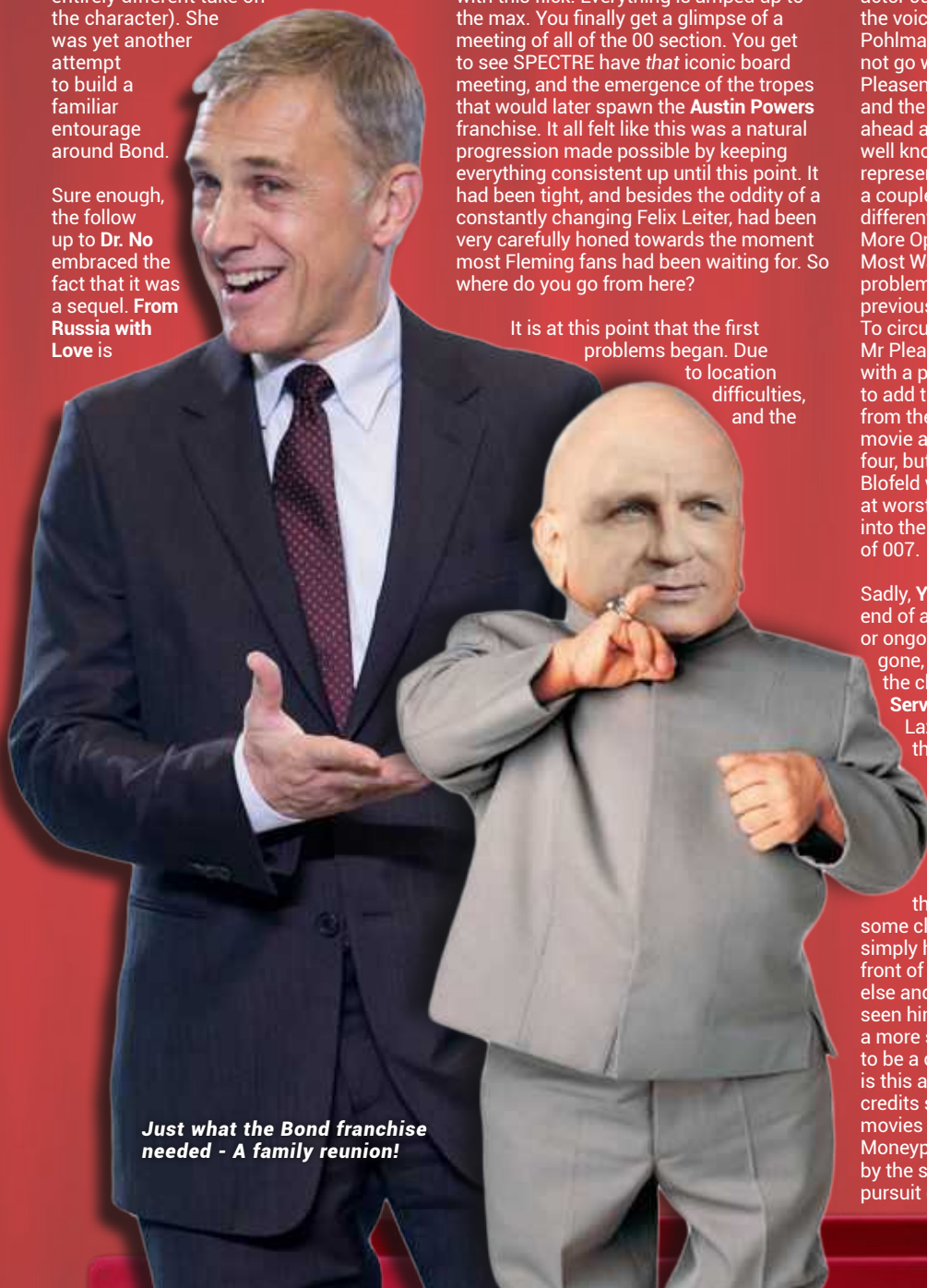
literally a plan to get revenge for the death of Dr. No by discrediting James Bond, and taking him out of the picture. Everything fits together nicely with its predecessor. **Goldfinger** wisely gives the audience a break from SPECTRE and gives us the template for the more fantastical excesses of the Bond movies of the '60s and '70s. Auric Goldfinger just wanted to make a pile of cash and enhance the value of his bullion supply. Again, **Goldfinger** fits in well with the previous instalments, maintaining the same supporting cast (although steady girl at home Sylvia had been wisely ditched at this point!). It was to be a nice break before SPECTRE jumped into the big leagues by publically stealing nuclear weapons and holding the world to ransom in **Thunderball**. Whilst I found its underwater scenes pretty boring, there is a prevailing sense of continuity payoff with this flick. Everything is amped up to the max. You finally get a glimpse of a meeting of all of the 00 section. You get to see SPECTRE have *that* iconic board meeting, and the emergence of the tropes that would later spawn the **Austin Powers** franchise. It all felt like this was a natural progression made possible by keeping everything consistent up until this point. It had been tight, and besides the oddity of a constantly changing Felix Leiter, had been very carefully honed towards the moment most Fleming fans had been waiting for. So where do you go from here?

It is at this point that the first problems began. Due to location difficulties, and the

uncertainty of Sean Connery continuing in the role, **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** was dropped in favour of **You Only Live Twice**. This created a problem in the sense that the novel, takes place after the murder of Bond's wife. Without the revenge element from the previous novel there really is no story to tell. Roald Dahl was drafted in, and the resultant heightened fantasy elements gave us the movie that would become almost a bible for Mike Myers and his Dr. Evil persona. It was yet another SPECTRE plot orchestrated from their swanky new lair in a hollowed out volcano (try building *that* with modern spy satellites!). It was finally time for the big reveal. Time to finally reveal that Number One was in fact Ernst Stavro Blofeld, and Eon had to finally make good on all the buildup. Initially, the continuity would have been quite sound. The plan was for Czech actor Jan Werich to play the part but with the voice provided by the excellent Eric Pohlmann again. Sadly the screen test did not go well and at the last minute Donald Pleasence was drafted in as replacement, and the planned voice dub could not go ahead as Pleasence was probably too well known to get away with that. This represents the first break with continuity on a couple of levels. Firstly, the voice is totally different. More creepy than menacing. More Operation Yewtree than Interpol's Most Wanted. Then you also have the problem that in several scenes in the previous movies, Blofeld clearly had hair! To circumvent some of these issues poor Mr Pleasence was forced to play the part with a prosthetic scar over his right eye to add the missing menace, and distract from the obvious changes. The rest of the movie again fits in well with the preceding four, but to many this reveal of Ernst Stavro Blofeld was a disappointment at best, and at worst undid some of the hard work put into the construction of the cinematic world of 007.

Sadly, **You Only Live Twice** would mark the end of any serious attempt at a continuity or ongoing story arc. With Connery now gone, a new direction was sought, and the choice of **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** as the introduction of George Lazenby was an odd one considering the importance of the final moments of the novel. There was also a massive problem with the story, as James Bond goes undercover at a clinic where Blofeld is plotting his next attempt at world blackmail. In the novels they had not met at this point. This would seem to require some clever writing, but strangely they simply have James Bond just turn up in front of Blofeld pretending to be someone else and Blofeld appears to have never seen him before. This Blofeld, as played by a more serious Telly Savalas, also seems to be a completely different persona. So is this a reboot of sorts? Well, the opening credits suggest not, as the previous movies are all briefly reprised. Also M, Money Penny, and Q are all still played by the same actors. Bond is also in hot pursuit of Blofeld and SPECTRE, suggesting

Just what the Bond franchise needed - A family reunion!





SPECTRE 2015

that they have been around causing the problems covered in the previous movies. Even George Lazenby himself mentions 'the other fella' in a cheeky in-joke! It seemed that the message was just to go along for the ride and not think about it. **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** is probably my second favourite Bond movie, but I have to admit it was despite the abandonment of any attempt of ongoing narrative. Any hopes that the return of Sean Connery in **Diamonds Are Forever** would fix this glitch were soon dashed with a lacklustre *revenge* against Blofeld in the pre-credit sequence that went out of its way to avoid mentioning whether this was motivated by the events at the end of the previous movie, or that he was just out to capture him as a matter of course. He was again played by a different actor, with Charles Gray playing it strictly panto, and even managing to fit in a bit of cross-dressing.

From this point on, there is also an argument that each actor's tenure presents a separate continuity. Which seems to make some sense with regards to characters like Sheriff J.W. Pepper, who seems to exist only in the Moore era, or the character played by Robbie Coltrane in the Brosnan era. Yet it is clear that Bond has had a wife that died in several of these eras, and in the much derided **Die Another Day**, the items on show during the Q scenes certainly suggest everything in the prior movies still holds true. It certainly ended up a complete mess, but for a while it held together and made sense at a time when ongoing series of movies seldom did.

Now in the modern era of Daniel Craig, the choice of **SPECTRE** clearly raised some eyebrows, especially with the emergence of the leaked script which I detailed back in Issue 412. Now, there are a few **SPOILERS** from this point on!

It is with a depressed sense of sadness that I can confirm my fears relayed in that issue to be true. **SPECTRE** is indeed with

us (I review it on page 84), and they have included the twist that Blofeld is now the evil foster brother of James Bond. In a sleight of hand that fooled absolutely no one, Christoph Waltz is playing a character called Franz Oberhauser, who has changed his name to Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Pretty much playing the same trick employed in **Star Trek Into Darkness** that attempted to hide the needless inclusion of Khan. In mind numbing fashion, they even carry this further and unconvincingly explain that everything that has happened since **Casino Royale** is entirely due to the fact that baby Blofeld was jealous of his dad fostering Bond. So obviously, he killed their mutual dad and built an evil organisation so that he could wreck his life from a distance, until one day he could invite him to a holistic retreat that resembles a poor man's clone of the volcano base from **You Only Live Twice**. At which point he could drill some holes in his head so that he would not remember a girl that he has only just met.

It's a massive shame as **SPECTRE** introduces many of the missing elements to the Bond mythos. It starts out as a proper Bond movie; it has an astonishing pre-credits sequence. Some of the scenes are pure Fleming travelogue. The action is great, and the actual scene that recreates the **Thunderball** board meeting is really mesmerising. Just the right pitch of nostalgia with a modern tilt. Q is back to being one of the highlights of the film. M is played to perfection by Ralph Fiennes. Loving the new Moneypenny, and it's nice to see some grounded gadgetry worming its way in. But for all of this, I am sorry but the *twist* just takes the piss. It's laughable and distracting. It also has the conceit of tainting the other three movies, and never comes across as credible. It takes more than some weird rooms with black and white pictures of the characters from those prior movies hung up or some pictures in the title sequence to establish convincingly that this was an ongoing narrative planned from the start. Unlike Eon in the early '60s

there is no sense of a plan (other than Quantum, whose demise is not explained). You simply have to accept that the character of Silva in **Skyfall**, a bad guy that never got tired of lengthy plot exposition, kept it shtum about working for the most evil bad guys in the world? All it would have taken were a few quick scenes, and lines of foreshadowing dialogue. Yet there was nothing. So you are left with **SPECTRE** actually retconning **Skyfall**, and maybe just hoping that you don't remember too much about the other two entries. If you can ignore all of this, **SPECTRE** is actually a good Bond movie, but I just personally hate all this *closed universe* stuff. Ironically, I find it far less believable than characters just simply crossing paths due to their jobs, and going after each other once it becomes personal. *That* is the world we live in. When you make James Bond the central character of focus, with everything revolving around him, you weaken his central concept. He is just a deeply flawed man doing his best to conquer often insurmountable odds. As a result of the introduction of this latest layer to the Bond mythology, you actually make the world a place that would have been better off if he had never been born, leaving young Blofeld not having to share his toys, or get annoyed that foster brother James has left a floater in the toilet.

I can live with **SPECTRE** being a modern reimagining of **Thunderball** and **You Only Live Twice**, with some aesthetic nods to **On Her Majesty's Secret Service**. The fact that it is also a reimagining of **Austin Powers in Goldmember** - Not so much. ✦

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